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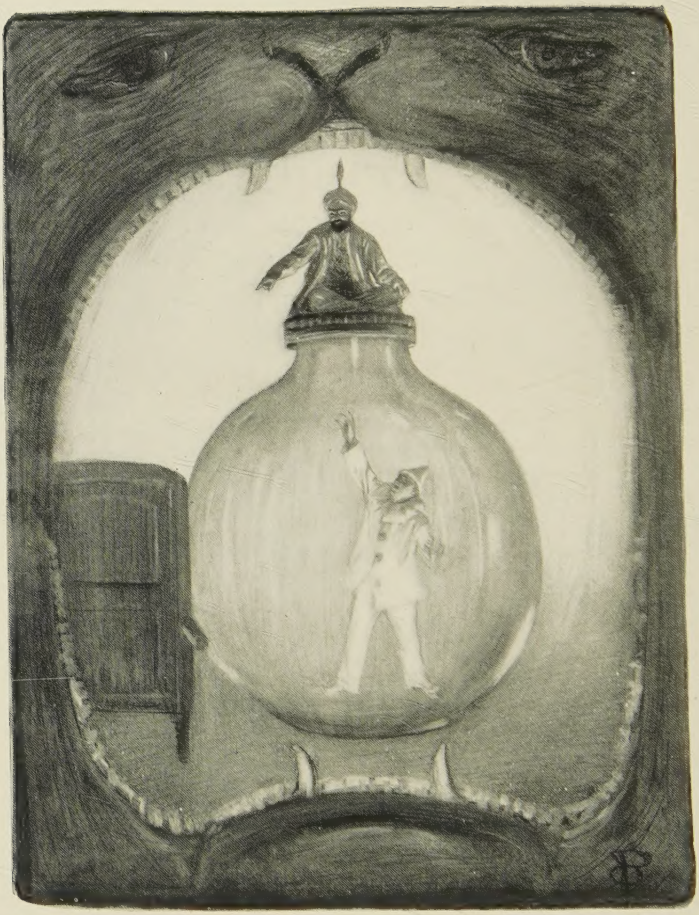

"Pointed in Wild Frenzy to the One Sitting Above"

Drawing by Power O'Malley. To illustrate "The Man on the Bottle," by Gustave Meyrink

J. R. Williams

Library of

The World's Best

MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE STORIES

EDITED BY

JULIAN HAWTHORNE

GERMAN :: RUSSIAN :: SCANDINAVIAN

GUSTAV MEYRINK
PAUL HEYSE
ERNEST HOFFMANN
VSEVOLOD KRESTOVSKI
OTTO LARSSEN
DIETRICH THEDEN
WILHELM HAUFF
ANTON CHEKHOFF
JÖRGEN BERGSÖE
BERNHARD INGEMANN
STEEN STEENSEN BLICHER

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The Review of Reviews Company
1907

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German–Russian–Scandinavian Mystery Stories

Gustav Meyrink

The Man on the Bottle

MELANCHTHON was dancing with the Bat, whose costume represented her in an inverted position. The wings were folded close to the body, and in the claws she held a large gold hoop upright, which gave the impression that she was hanging, suspended from some imaginary point. The effect was grotesque, and it amused Melanchthon very much, for he had to peep through this gold hoop, which was exactly on a level with his face, while dancing with the Bat.

She was one of the most original masks—and at the same time one of the most repelling ones—at the fête of the Persian prince. She had even impressed his highness, Mohammed Darasche-Koh, the host.

"I know you, pretty one," he had nodded to her, much to the amusement of the bystanders.

"It is certainly the little marquise, the intimate friend of the princess," declared a Dutch councilor in a Rembrandt costume. He surmised this because she knew every turn and corner of the palace, to judge by her conversation. And but a few moments ago, when some cavalier had ordered felt boots and torches so that they might go down into the courtyard and indulge in snowballing, the Bat joined them and participated wildly in the game. It was then—and the Dutchman was quite ready to back it with

a wager—that he had seen a well-known bracelet on her wrist.

"Oh, how interesting," exclaimed a Blue Butterfly. "Couldn't Melanchthon discreetly discover whether or not Count Faast is a slave of the princess?"

"Don't speak so loud," interrupted the Dutch councilor. "It is a mighty good thing that the orchestra played the close of that waltz *fortissimo*, for the prince was standing here only a moment since."

"Better not speak of such things," whispered an Egyptian, "for the jealousy of this Asiatic prince knows no bounds, and there are probably more explosives in the palace than we dream. Count de Faast has been playing with fire too long, and if Darasche-Koh suspects——"

A rough figure representing a huge knot dashed by them in wild flight to escape a Hellenic warrior in shimmering armor.

"If you were the Gordian knot, Mynherr, and were pursued by Alexander the Great, wouldn't you be frightened?" teased the inverted Bat, tapping the Dutchman coquettishly on the end of the nose with her fan.

"The sharp wit of the pretty Marquise Bat betrays her," smiled a lanky Satan with tail and cloven foot. "What a pity that only as a Bat are you to be seen with your feet in the air."

The dull sound of a gong filled the room as an executioner appeared, draped in a crimson robe. He tapped a bronze gong, and then, resting his weight on his glittering cudgel, posed himself in the center of the big hall.

Out of every niche and lobby the maskers streamed toward him—harlequins, cannibals, an ibis, and some Chinese, Don Quixotes, Columbines, bayaderes and dominoes of all colors.

The crimson executioner distributed tablets of ivory inscribed with gold letters.

"Oh, programmes for the entertainment!" chorused the crowd.

THE MAN IN THE BOTTLE

Marionette Comedy in the Spirit of Aubrey Beardsley

By Prince Mohammed Darasche-Koh

Characters:

The Man in the Bottle.....Miguel, Count de Faast
The Man on the Bottle.....Prince Mohammed Darasche-Koh
The Lady in the Sedan Chair.....————

Vampires, Marionettes, Hunchbacks, Apes, Musicians

Scene of Action: A Tiger's Maw

"What! The prince the author of this marionette play?"

"Probably a scene out of the 'Thousand and One Nights.'"

"But who will play the part of the Lady in the Sedan Chair?"

"Oh, there is a great surprise in store for us," twittered a seductive Incroyable, leaning on the arm of an Abbé. "Do you know, the Pierrot with whom I danced the tarantelle was the Count de Faast, who is going to play The Man in the Bottle; and he confided a lot of things to me: the marionettes will be very grewsome—that is, for those who appreciate the spirit of the thing—and the prince had an elephant sent down from Hamburg—but you are not listening to me at all!" And the little one dropped the arm of her escort and bolted into the swirling crowd.

New groups of masks constantly poured out of the adjoining rooms through the wide doorways into the big hall, making a kaleidoscopic play of colors, while files of costumed guests stood admiring the wonderful mural frescoes that rose to the blue, star-dotted ceiling. Attendants served refreshments, sorbets and wines in the window niches.

With a rolling sound the walls of the narrow end of the hall separated and a stage was pushed slowly into view. Its setting, in red brown and a flaming yellow proscenium,

was a yawning tiger's maw, the white teeth glittering above and below.

In the middle of the scene stood a huge glass bottle in the form of a globe, with walls at least a foot thick. It was about twice the height of an average man and very roomy. The back of the scene was draped with pink silk hangings.

Then the colossal ebony doors of the hall opened and admitted a richly caparisoned elephant, which advanced with majestic tread. On its head sat the crimson executioner guiding the beast with the butt of his cudgel. Chains of amethysts dangled from the elephant's tusks, and plumes of peacock feathers nodded from its head. Heavily embroidered gold cloths streamed down from the back of the beast, skirting the floor; across its enormous forehead there was a network of sparkling jewels.

The maskers flocked around the advancing beast, shouting greetings to the gay group of actors seated in the palanquin; Prince Darasche-Koh with turban and aigrette, Count de Faast as Pierrot, marionettes and musicians, stiff as wooden puppets. The elephant reached the stage, and with its trunk lifted one man after another from its back. There was much applause and a yell of delight as the beast seized the Pierrot and sliding him into the neck of the bottle, closed the metal top. Then the Persian prince was placed on top of the bottle.

The musicians seated themselves in a semicircle, drawing forth strange, slender instruments. The elephant gazed at them a moment, then turned about and strode toward the door. Like a lot of happy children the maskers clung to its trunk, ears, and tusks and tried to hold it back; but the animal seemed not to feel their weight at all.

The performance began, and somewhere, as if out of the ground, there arose weird music. The puppet orchestra of marionettes remained lifeless and waxen; the flute player stared with glassy, idiotic eyes at the ceiling; the features of the rococo conductor in peruke and plumed hat, holding the baton aloft and pressing a pointed finger mysteriously

to his lips, were distorted by a shrewd, uncanny smile. In the foreground posed the marionettes. Here were grouped a humpbacked dwarf with chalky face, a gray, grinning devil, and a sallow, rouged actress with carmine lips. The three seemed possessed of some satanic secret that had paralyzed their movements. The semblance of death brooded over the entire motionless group.

The Pierrot in the bottle now began to move restlessly. He doffed his white felt hat, bowed and occasionally greeted the Persian prince, who with crossed legs sat on the cap of the bottle. His antics amused the audience. The thick walls of glass distorted his appearance curiously; sometimes his eyes seemed to pop out of his head; then again they disappeared, and one saw only forehead and chin; sometimes he was fat and bloated, then again slender, with long legs like a spider's.

In the midst of a motionless pause the red silk hangings of the background parted, and a closed sedan chair was carried on by two Moors, who placed it near the bottle. A ray of pale light from above now illuminated the scene. The spectators had formed themselves into two camps. The one was speechless under the spell of this vampiric, enigmatic marionette play that seemed to exhale an atmosphere of poisoned merriment; the other group, not sensitive enough to appreciate such a scene, laughed immoderately at the comical capering of the man in the bottle. He had given up his merry dancing and was trying by every possible means to impart some information or other to the prince sitting on the cap. He pounded the walls of the bottle as though he would smash them; and to all appearances he was screaming at the top of his voice, although not the slightest sound penetrated the thick glass.

The Persian prince acknowledged the movements of the Pierrot with a smile, pointing with his finger at the sedan chair.

The curiosity of the audience reached its climax when it saw that the Pierrot had pressed his face against the glass and was staring at something in the window of the sedan

chair. Then suddenly, like one gone mad, he beat his face with his hands, sank on his knees and tore his hair. Then he sprang furiously up and raced around the bottle at such speed that the audience saw only a fluttering cloth in his wake.

The secret of the Lady in the Sedan Chair puzzled the audience considerably—they could only see that a white face was pressed against the window of the chair and was staring over at the bottle. Shadows cut off all further view.

Laughter and applause rose to a tumult. Pierrot had crouched on the bottom of the bottle, his fingers clutching his throat. Then he opened his mouth wide and pointed in wild frenzy to his chest and then to the one sitting above. He folded his hands in supplication, as though he were begging something from the audience.

"He wants something to drink! Such a large bottle and no wine in it? I say, you marionettes, give him a drink," cried one of the maskers.

Everybody laughed and applauded.

Then the Pierrot jumped up once more, tore his garments from his chest and staggered about until he measured his length on the bottom of the bottle.

"Bravo, bravo, Pierrot! Wonderfully acted! *Da capo, da capo!*" yelled the maskers.

When the man in the bottle did not stir again and made no effort to repeat his scene, the applause gradually subsided and the attention of the spectators was drawn to the marionettes. They still remained motionless in the poses they had assumed, but in their miens there was now a sense of expectancy that had not been there before. It seemed as if they were waiting for a cue.

The humpbacked dwarf, with the chalked face, turned his eyes carefully and gazed at the Prince Darasche-Koh. The Persian did not stir.

Finally two figures advanced from the background, and one of the Moors haltingly approached the sedan chair and opened the door.

And then something very remarkable occurred—the body

of a woman fell stiffly out on the stage. There was a moment of deathly silence and then a thousand voices arose: "What has happened?"

Marionettes, apes, musicians—all leaped forward; maskers climbed up on the stage.

The princess, wife of Darasche-Koh, lay there strapped to a steel frame. Where the ropes had cut into her flesh were blue bruises, and in her mouth there was a silk gag.

A nameless horror took possession of the audience.

"Pierrot!" a voice suddenly shrilled. "Pierrot!" Like a dagger, indescribable fear penetrated every heart.

"Where is the prince?"

During the tumult the Persian had disappeared.

Melanchthon stood on the shoulders of Mephisto, but he could not lift the cap of the bottle, and the air valve was screwed tightly shut.

"Break the walls of the bottle! Quick!"

The Dutch councilor tore the cudgel from the hand of the crimson executioner and with a leap landed on the stage.

A grewsome sound arose, like the tolling of a cracked bell. Like streaks of white lightning the cracks leaped across the surface of the glass. Finally the bottle was splintered into bits. And within lay, suffocated, the corpse of the Count de Faast, his fingers clawing his breast.

Silently and with invisible pinions the gigantic ebon birds of terror streaked through the hall of the fête.

Dietrich Theden

Christian Lahusen's Baron

FROM the beginning the villagers said that there was something queer about the Baron, "Farmer Christian's Baron," as they called him. Of course, even the most inveterate gossips of the neighborhood didn't expect things to turn out just as they did. But the gossips enjoyed themselves because of the outcome, which enlivened many a long winter evening for them. They were sorry for Christian, of course, but they said it did him good. And then he was a rich man, and could stand a lesson even if it did cost him quite a pretty sum.

Christian Lahusen, owner of the Sea Inn, was a man whose carriage and bearing, one might say his whole attitude toward life, showed that his bank account was of a satisfactory heaviness, and that his land was good land which repaid his labor and his confidence.

The Lake Inn farm belonged to the wealthy village of Brügghofen, near Kiel. The farm itself was of considerable size, with good rich loam and a fine beach wood surrounding a pretty little lake from which the inn took its name. Agriculture and the fishing in the lake were not the only occupation of the owner of the farm. His many-sided energy allowed him to give sufficient attention to an eating and drinking establishment in one wing of this house, and not to neglect over it a general store at the opposite end of the large building. Besides the favorite lager beer which he ordered from Kiel, he brewed a beer on his own grounds which was eagerly consumed by all the neighborhood, and also sold in considerable quantities to other inns in the vicinity. A large metal shield with golden letters on a black ground told all who might be interested that Chris-

tian was also the general agent of a large fire insurance company, and his customers comprised almost the entire landed population of the district. But more important than any of these was his wholesale fruit trade, which made his name known far beyond the boundaries of his own county. Christian Lahusen was the first farmer who had utilized the railroad for the service of his business. He bought up the entire fruit output for many square miles and sent whole carloads to Kiel and Hamburg. The fruit growers of the neighborhood, even the owners of the large baronial estates, brought all their produce to Christian, and he numbered the largest shops of the cities among his customers.

All this naturally made Christian a marked man among his fellows, and a man universally respected for his energy and his success. But, like everyone else, he had his failings. One particular little fancy of his was the cause of great amusement to the entire neighborhood,—of amusement that turned to distrust and led to many a well-meant warning. But these warnings passed all unheeded, and Christian brought his trouble upon himself.

The owner of the Lake Inn farm had two daughters, and he had great hopes and schemes for them. The youngest, Marie, was still only fourteen years old, and was a pupil in a leading boarding school in Kiel. From this school the elder sister, Dorothea, had just returned as a maiden of seventeen. For a few weeks before this story opens, Dorothea had been visiting her sister in Kiel, and had made an aristocratic acquaintance who is the hero of this serio-comic tale. This gentleman had evidently become so interested in Dorothea that he followed her home and took a room at the inn for an indefinite length of time. Christian Lahusen introduced him to the daily guests as Baron Herbert von Waregg, pronouncing the name as if it gave him the greatest pleasure. The Baron was polite enough whenever he would condescend to depart from his usual elegant reserve and make the acquaintance of the peasants of the neighborhood. But, somehow, the villagers did not seem to take to the Baron, and they laughed at Christian

for his folly, the best natured of them saying that they hoped at least that his fancy for the aristocracy would not cost him all too dear. They did not know quite how well justified their distrust turned out to be.

The Baron had a large amount of baggage with him and dressed in the latest style. He wore easy morning clothes of the most fashionable cut during the week, and honored the Sunday by shining patent-leather boots, pale-gray trousers, a long black frock coat and a most carefully brushed silk hat, which he wore just a little over one eye. When he walked through the village streets or on the shores of the lake in all this elegance, he was the cause of great excitement among the small boys of the neighborhood. The village girls appeared to look upon him with favor, which naturally increased the dislike of the men of the neighborhood.

The tall hat made the Baron look even longer than he was, and lengthened his narrow face in a rather disadvantageous manner. His guest's height would make even Lahusen smile, when the former was obliged to bow his head considerably to pass in under the somewhat low door of the inn. "I'll have to send for the carpenter to raise the top of that door," laughed the landlord. But his peasant friends told him that they didn't think it was necessary. "It won't hurt the Baron—or whatever he may be—to have to make a bow to a decent farmer occasionally," said one of them.

"It is not so much his height I'm worrying about," said another. "He can carry it all, for he stands up as stiff as a ramrod. But it's his face I don't like. I can't say what it is, but there's something in it that makes me think I wouldn't trust the man."

"What's in it?" said the third. "Why, nothing but a nose like a hawk and eyes like a cat——"

Christian Lahusen rattled the glasses at his bar in a noticeable way, as a delicate hint that he did not like the conversation.

The peasants were not so far out of the way with their description of "hawk's nose and cat's eyes." But in spite of this, the Baron's face was not altogether unpleasing, and was certainly not uninteresting. It would light up well when he was talking to his landlord, and he could then show an amiability which quite charmed the farmer, and make him think that the distrust shown by his friends in the village sprang from their lack of understanding a gentleman of the great world. He paid no further attention to their remarks, but merely shrugged his shoulders. One thing did worry him, however, and that was his daughter's attitude toward the Baron.

Dorothea Lahusen was a typical Holstein girl in appearance; above middle height, slender but well developed, bloomingly healthy, with rich blond hair and clear frank blue eyes. Her character also showed all the good qualities of her countrywomen. She was capable and energetic, efficient in the ordering of her house, neat and tidy, straightforward and honest in her loyal devotion to her family and in her reserve toward strangers. Her boarding-school education in the city had given her somewhat easier manners than those of country girls generally. It had awakened her intelligence and raised her from the plane of her friends at home, thus seeming to heighten her reserve toward them, and to give to her attitude toward the Baron the politeness of maidenly modesty. She had met the gentleman at the house of a friend in the city, and at the various parties and excursions that had brought them together, he had noticeably shown his preference for her. His attentions had flattered her, although she did not feel herself drawn toward him in the slightest. She had accepted the bouquet which he brought to the train on her departure simply to show her gratitude for his preference. But she had been much astonished when he appeared at the inn and engaged a room for a prolonged stay.

Several months had passed and Waregg was still there. He had entirely won the father's confidence, and went in and out as if he were a member of the family. But he did

not seem to have made any advance in Dorothea's favor. The girl talked to him as to anyone else at the table, but she evidently avoided being alone with him. She could not have explained what it was that warned her to be cautious and not to encourage his suit. Nor could she have told what it was that affected her unpleasantly, when he would wander into the store in the busy early evening hours to help her father and to chat with the customers.

"Looking for change?" he asked once, as Dorothea could not seem to find the money she looked for, and was about to send out the errand boy. "Please permit me." Waregg brought out a handful of change from his pocket, counted it out, and said, laughing, "Don't you want to make me your banker? I won't ask any commission."

The next evening he was there again. The store was full, and Lahusen as well as his daughter had as much as they could do.

"Want some help?" asked the Baron amiably. "I'm a trained cashier; can't I help you a little, my dear friend?"

Christian Lahusen was very glad of the assistance, and gave the Baron the entire charge of the cash, turning the money over to him with simply a mention of the sum to be returned, and then going right on to the next customer himself. Dorothea did not like this, but she did not want to show her distrust and so followed her father's example. The Baron was quick and adept at his work, said laughingly that he was glad he was of some use in the world, and remained in the store as long as they did. His daily assistance came to be a matter of habit. There was but one disadvantage, if one can call it that, about this new arrangement. The women customers, finding that the Baron was there every evening, appeared to prefer those hours for their errands, and the room was often so crowded that it was impossible to move sometimes. Waregg appeared much amused at this, and exchanged jokes with his landlord about it.

Punctually every Saturday evening the Baron paid his weekly bill. This was not a very large one, and was in-

creased only on the rare occasions when the Baron allowed himself a good bottle of wine.

"He must have *some* money," acknowledged even Detlev Bruhn, who had been the first and worst to talk against the Baron.

"He? He has more money than you and I together, Detlev," declared Lahusen.

"Has he spoken to you about his affairs?" asked the other.

"Why, of course."

"What part of the country does he come from?"

"From Austria, if you must know."

"Oh!—and what is his father?"

"His father—his father is a bank president, and has a big estate besides. He showed me a picture of the castle—it's fine, I tell you."

"Has he got the picture with him?"

"Yes—that is, he sent for it."

"Hm! Has he sent for money, much?"

"For these few months? A man like that doesn't go round with a few groschen in his pocket. Besides, he doesn't need much here. He'd use more in one week in the city than he would here in four months. Why, he's saving money now!"

"Will he—will he stay much longer?" asked Detlev.

This was his way of avoiding the direct question which the entire village was asking itself, "Will he ask for your daughter's hand?"

"We'll see soon, I suppose," answered Lahusen evasively.

"He—hasn't got a profession, I suppose?" continued Bruhn.

"He studied at college—the law, I think. In Vienna and Berlin. People like that, Detlev, can arrange their vacation just as they like. They don't need to earn money, 'cause they have more than they can spend, anyway."

"'Twould make me lazy—I'd want something to do."

"Yes, *you* might, Detlev. And I would, too, but there's

all sorts of people in this world. And, besides, he isn't quite lazy even here. In the store evenings, for instance, he takes entire charge of the money. You ought to see how he can work."

"Indeed?" asked Detlev Bruhn, with a long-drawn tone.

Lahusen poured out a fresh glass of beer. "Prost, Detlev!"

"Prost, Christian! you made a good thing out of this year's plums, didn't you?"

"I'm satisfied."

. . . . . .

Toward the end of September Waregg went to Kiel for a day, returning in time to help Lahusen with his accounting after the close of the apple trade. Combined with the payment for a large order from a big Hamburg house, the amounts that came in reached a considerable height.

"Don't you think we'll make up that last twenty thousand?" joked the Baron. "I really shouldn't have thought that a few carloads of apples——"

Lahusen interrupted with a laugh. "Would run up such a capital, hey? Well, I suppose you have different sums to calculate with than we do."

"Yes, at least my old man does. He strings on a few ciphers on general principles before he begins to add up. But as far as I'm concerned, I respect the smallest sum when I see it's honestly worked for. But your business is worthy of respect anyway. This Hamburg firm, for instance—let me see—it's No. 60 or 70 Graskeller, isn't it?—yes, Heinrich Kruse, that's the name on the draft. Are they secure?"

"As certain as death. They complain now and then and want to cut down a little, but they are honest as gold."

"Hm, you see I don't know much about that sort of thing. And it's a draft on sight, too, no loss of interest. Now that we're here alone, my dear Lahusen, won't you shut your book a moment, and allow me a discreet question?"

"Certainly." Christian Lahusen knew what was com-

ing. At least, he thought he did, and his fresh round face flushed.

Waregg came to the point at once. "I suppose you know what's keeping me here? Will you give me your daughter for my wife?"

"Have you spoken to her?" asked Lahusen, hesitating.

"No, I wish to be quite correct and to secure your consent first."

Lahusen stood up. "If my daughter wants you, I have nothing against it."

"I will speak to her myself."

"Yes, I will leave that to you."

"She is busy in the house now. But late in the afternoon when she is free, I will find her. It can hardly surprise her by this time."

Lahusen pressed his guest's hand. "Yes, speak to her then," he said.

So he really meant business; he thought in triumph. What a sensation it would make in the village! and what a defeat for the gossips and the backbiters! Lahusen mopped his brow with his handkerchief, put his books and his accounts in his iron safe, hurried through his house and garden and couldn't seem to await the afternoon. During the day, however, a young friend of Dorothea's came to take her away to a birthday party, which rather upset the plans of the men of the household and put them in a bad humor. During the early evening, when there was so much business in the store, there was no possibility of a quiet conversation. The Baron didn't come to take care of the cash that evening, but promenaded the garden, instead, with a very melancholy expression of face.

Finally, after supper, the balmy air drew Dorothea to the garden, and she wandered out to a little arbor with a romantic outlook on the lake and the woods beyond. It was a charming evening, with the delicate light of the early moon over wood and water, and the young girl hummed a song gently as she sat there alone.

In the deep silence she was startled by steps approach-

ing the arbor. She recognized the Baron and left her little nook, as she did not wish to be alone with him in any place so secluded.

She answered his greetings with reserve.

"May I speak to you for a moment?" Waregg began.

She nodded and walked slowly through the garden path, while he followed at her side.

"Miss Dorothea, I have followed you ever since I first met you. Must I tell you why I am here?"

She halted and turned to look at him.

"I *will* tell you then," he said. "I love you, Dorothea; will you be my wife?"

She was surprised at the calmness with which she heard his words, particularly as the moonlight streaming over his face brought out its peculiarities more clearly than she had ever seen them before. It looked yellow, deepened in spots where the smooth-shaven black beard gleamed through the skin. The turned-up corners of the mustache had an artificial appearance; fine lines that years alone can bring were gathered about the corners of his eyes, and his glance had a glowing keenness that frightened her.

She shook her blond head. "No," she said; "I thank you for the honor you have done me, but I cannot accept."

He paused for a moment, then answered calmly, with a sharp glance at her: "Forgive me, if I ventured to hope too much. I had your father's consent. But if I cannot win yours, I will leave this place at once." He bowed formally and ceremoniously. "I will take the noon train tomorrow and may therefore have no further opportunity to see you. Farewell, Miss Lahusen."

She bowed without speaking and breathed a deep sigh of relief as he walked quickly toward the house and left her alone with the peace of the evening. She saw no more of the Baron that evening. When she had remained about an hour more in the garden she went quietly upstairs to her own room without going to see her father as usual. She was still awake when, at eleven o'clock, the last guests left the inn room, and shortly after that she heard her father

come upstairs. She heard midnight strike from the deep-toned church clock of Brügghofen, then her eyes closed in the deep healthy sleep of youth.

. . . . .

Lahusen was usually the first up in the morning, awakening his daughter and the rest of the household force by knocking on their doors. The morning following Dorothea's refusal of Waregg, Lahusen started up uneasily from his bed, as it seemed to him that he heard a loud knocking at the window of the inn room which looked out upon the main street. He looked at his clock, saw that it was only five o'clock and listened again. There it was, beyond a doubt this time. "Well, that *is* early," he said, sprang out of bed, and drew his clothes on hastily.

Five o'clock was the usual rising hour at the farm in summer, but for several weeks now the winter hour of six o'clock had been introduced. Even the early drovers did not come before six. Who could it possibly be?

Bum—bum—bum—there it was again, at the window of the inn room. Lahusen opened his own window and called out, "Yes, yes, one moment." He finished his toilet in haste and hurried down to welcome the early guest.

A broad-shouldered stranger with a dark gray overcoat and a stiff black hat stood before him as he opened the door. "Good morning. Is this Mr. Lahusen?"

"Yes, I am he."

"I beg your pardon for coming so early. My name is Groth. Police Commissioner from Kiel."

"Who? what?" asked the landlord, surprised.

The Commissioner pointed to a little shield under his overcoat and continued, "I come on official business; may I speak to you alone?"

Lahusen led the way to the room in surprise. "You come on business? To me?" he asked as if in doubt.

The stranger took a portfolio from his pocket, searched among the papers it contained, took one out, read it and asked, "Is there a Baron Herbert von Waregg living here?"

"Waregg?" stammered Lahusen astounded.

"Herbert von Waregg, as he calls himself."

"Calls himself?"

"Will you please answer my question? Does the gentleman live here?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Is he still in the house?"

"Why, yes, in his room."

The Commissioner smiled. "That's good. I was afraid the bird might have flown. I have an order here to arrest the Baron."

"What? Arrest him?"

"I'm very sorry that I have to thus disturb you, and I am sorry also to have to tell you that you have fallen into the hands of a swindler."

"A swindler? Oh, impossible!" cried Lahusen in excitement.

The official showed him the warrant, but the letters danced before Lahusen's eyes. He could only make out the official heading and the words "Warrant for Arrest," then a strange name, "Thomas Gliczek," and beside it in brackets, "Baron Herbert von Waregg, also Lieutenant Thomas von Böwegg," and then finally the signature "District Attorney Rüttgers."

Yes, he knew that last name. The man was the brother of a landed proprietor who was one of his customers. And this representative of justice was on the heels of his Baron, and this Baron von Waregg was only Thomas Gliczek and a common swindler! Lahusen groaned, and it was some time before he could control himself. But then he pulled himself together and told the official to do his duty. "Come with me." He crossed a narrow corridor between the inn room and the store and pointed to a staircase which led to the second story.

"Lead the way, please," said the official. "But be careful that the stairs do not creak."

They tiptoed past several doors until Lahusen stopped before one of them, to which he pointed. The Commis-

sioner turned the knob gently and found that the door was locked. He took an instrument from his pocket and opened it noiselessly. They stepped inside, but the bed was empty. The trunks still stood in the room, several suits and coats hung in the wardrobe, and a half-opened drawer was full of underwear. The bed had not been used at all.

The official turned to Lahusen. "Did the man have other rooms?" he said, evidently in a bad humor.

"No, only this one, the largest in the house."

The Commissioner stepped to the window. "Aha!" he exclaimed, "he has escaped us after all." He drew up a heavy rope which was fastened to the window sill and hung down nearly to the ground. "You see the path he has taken. That sort of man has a fine sense of danger and generally gets out in time. Do you know whether he received a telegram last night?"

"Not that I know of."

"We got wind of him yesterday in Kiel through a woman he lived with." (Lahusen gasped at this.) "A Polish woman, very ordinary sort," continued the Commissioner. "He has neglected her since the beginning of the summer, and that made her very angry. He came back to her day before yesterday, brought her money, and told her that he would send her some regularly from now on, from here. The woman believed that he was deceiving her and she betrayed him to the police. In this way we found out where he was, but too late again. Well, it wasn't my knocking that frightened him, for he has not been to bed this night and probably left here in the late evening. You see, he shut the door carefully that his flight would not be discovered until as late as possible. I suppose he told you all sorts of things about himself, and—was he in your debt also?"

Christian Lahusen shook his head. "No, even yesterday evening he paid me up for the very last days."

"Yesterday was Thursday; did he usually pay on that day?"

"No, he usually paid his bill on Saturdays."

"How long has he been here?"

"Since the beginning of the summer."

"Oh, indeed! During the whole time he's been away from the woman then. And he paid regularly, you said?"

"Yes, every Saturday regularly."

"But then, didn't you notice the change in the day? Didn't you wonder why he paid yesterday?"

Lahusen was embarrassed. "Well, I'll tell you," he said finally; "you see he was a suitor for my daughter's hand. She refused him yesterday and he told us that he would leave to-day."

"Oh, indeed!" A gleam in the Commissioner's eyes showed that he was surprised at this. "Hm!" he continued, "this refusal could hardly have caused him to run away by night and leave all his things here. It was probably the fear of discovery from his other doings that caused him to hurry up with his wooing and then to flee when this last hope went back on him. If I only knew how the knowledge that the woman had betrayed him reached him. Did he have any callers?"

"Never, that I knew of."

"Not even yesterday?"

"No—that is, in the night perhaps. That I do not know, of course."

"When did he go to his room?"

"A little after ten, I think."

"And you heard nothing more of him?"

"No."

The Commissioner examined the trunks and the clothes that were scattered about, but could find nothing except a few loose leaves of newspapers and the photograph of a large house that looked like a castle. "This looks familiar," he remarked. "Isn't this Prince Heinrich's castle, Hemmelmark?"

Lahusen did not know the castle in question, and stammered out that the swindler had showed him this building as his family home. "He took it easy," replied the Com-

missioner ironically. "This is a side view of Hemmelmark."

He asked for any further information about statements the swindler had made, and took down notes. "Did he receive any money through the mails or in any other way?"

"No."

"Then I don't understand what he lived on and where he got the five hundred marks that he gave the woman yesterday. He didn't have any money at all last spring." He looked sharply at the innkeeper. "You have a very large business, I understand. Did he manage to get in on the inside of that somehow?"

Christian Lahusen changed color. "Robbed me, you mean?"

"Exactly."

Lahusen beat his forehead. "Impossible! I—" he murmured several things to himself that were not quite polite. He told his visitor of how the Baron had handled the cash evenings in the store.

"That's the explanation," said the Commissioner coolly, with a short laugh. "Were you quite blind? Paid you regularly out of your own pocket—eh! He took it piece by piece, I suppose—are you sure that he didn't take larger sums?"

Lahusen started.

"I suppose you do not leave the money in the shop till. Where do you keep the larger sums?"

"In the private office behind the inn room."

"Has he ever been there?"

"Sometimes; he helped me with my accounts occasionally."

The Commissioner loosened the rope from the window and closed the blinds. "I will close this room and keep the key. You must leave everything just as I have found it. And now lead me to your office."

Lahusen hastened down the stairs. A sudden idea that the swindler might have utilized the last night to carry out some big trick caused him to hurry very considerably.

He threw open the door and stared into the narrow room. Apparently everything was in perfect order and the safe untouched. He let himself fall on a chair. "That *was* a fright!"

Groth looked about him carefully. On a chair beside the safe he saw a little box made of wire netting such as is used as a tray for small safes. He raised it. "Did you forget to shut this in?" he asked.

Lahusen sprang up. "Why—why, how did that get there?" He took out his keys, sought hastily for the key of the safe with fingers that trembled, and finally opened it. After one look, he sprang back with a cry of horror.

The inside compartments were half open. The bags of gold and silver, the portfolio with the banknotes and the draft of the Kruse firm, even the rolls of small change, were all gone. Lahusen groaned and cursed and carried on like a madman.

The Commissioner waited impatiently until he was somewhat calmer. "Do you want to waken the whole house and the neighborhood, and give the swindler warning?" he asked energetically. "Calm yourself and answer my questions first. This safe has been opened with the key that belongs to it or another one just like it. You must have guarded your keys very carelessly. You probably left it in the lock and gave him a chance to make an impression. How much money was there in the safe?"

"Nineteen thousand marks," groaned the robbed man, sinking down in a chair.

The Commissioner seemed surprised. "As much as that? In gold or paper?"

"Three thousand in gold," groaned Lahusen. "About eleven thousand in banknotes—and, my God! there was the draft for four thousand eight hundred—the rascal forgot nothing."

"A draft?" inquired the official, taking down the figures. "When due?"

"On sight—on sight! that's the worst of all. He'll cash it at once."

"A sight draft? Have you a telegraph station here?"

"Yes, at the railway station. I will wire at once," said Lahusen hastily.

"You can leave that to me," answered Groth coolly. "To whom was the draft made out?"

"Hamann & Son in Kiel—good Lord! if we could only save that!"

"Calm yourself, you will probably get back most of the rest of it also. The draft is the noose in which the criminal will hang himself." Groth spoke with conviction. "I will tell you a few hurried facts about this Baron, so that you may see what sort of a man he was. And then you must do exactly as I tell you if you want us to help you officially. I shan't bother to make a long report now. That will do later." He closed his notebook and leaned back against the table.

"Gliczek is an international swindler." Groth spoke somewhat as if he were giving a lesson, but rather more quickly. "His last operations were carried out in Vienna, and he is being sought for by the Russian, English, and Prussian authorities. He is one of the cleverest of his kind. The police have never before had such a man to deal with. He appears at places where we could by no possibility expect him to be, and he disappears as completely as a meteor drops from the sky. He is considered a marvel in the circles of criminals, and also among the police officials. What he has done here has proved that this opinion is justified. Let us hope that his greed, and his anxiety to get as much as possible, may lead him to his fate."

Groth looked at his watch hastily. "It is almost half-past six already. Hamann & Son will open their offices at nine o'clock, and the swindler will probably be among the first to present his draft. I will telegraph the police to notify the bank and watch for the thief there. And still further: I do not think that he has sought safety in further flight as yet, for he may not have known of his betrayal through the woman. He will take for granted that several hours will pass before his disappearance and his crime here

are discovered, and until then he will feel quite safe in Kiel. You must not warn him by any noise here. Until I notify you, you must say nothing to anyone in this place. Do not let a word of your loss escape you. Wait as patiently as you can until to-morrow evening, unless you should hear from me before then. Should we not find him at the bank, we want to have time to search the hotels and all the criminal haunts for him, before he knows that he has been discovered. To-morrow evening at the very latest you will receive a telegram from me. And now, will you please give me a sheet of paper? How will this do?" He read the telegram he had written: "Important, Police Headquarters, Kiel. Gliczek robbed safe of Lahusen in Brügghofen. Fled probably to Kiel. Watch for him at bank Hamann & Son, will probably present draft on sight. Return at once myself. GROTH."

"I will be there myself a few minutes after nine," he said to Lahusen, and took a cool official farewell.

. . . . .

Lahusen found his daughter waiting for him with his morning coffee in their own little room behind the inn room. The old man struggled hard to control his emotion, as he did not wish his daughter to have any suspicions of what had happened during the night. "Is everybody up?" he asked Dorothea, and then discovered that his household had taken the opportunity for a little extra morning nap. He hurried from door to door, calling them, and then returned to the coffee table.

"The—Baron—has gone away," he said slowly, avoiding looking at her.

She noticed his excitement and thought she understood it. "It is better so, father," she said quietly and softly.

He did not answer, took a few swallows of coffee and left the room. He closed and locked his plundered safe, and went out to the shores of the lake.

The fresh autumn air cooled his heated brow and seemed to relieve his pain. His blue eyes, under their heavy brows, glanced around, but without seeing what was before them.

The money lost, if it could not be recovered, was bad enough, and would cost him the profit of an entire year. More, perhaps, for it was impossible to oversee what the thief might have taken during his evening "assistance" in the shop. But, more than all that, he felt keenly the foolish part which the swindler had forced him to play in his own house—a part that would now make him the laughing-stock of the entire village. And then the thought of his daughter, that was the worst of all. Had the rascal dared to pretend affection for her simply for the sake of the chance to rob the house? Or should the sweet girl really have made an impression on the criminal, and had he really the intention of marrying her, of carrying disgrace into a respectable family? Lahusen rejoiced that his child had not been carried away by a title and the appearance of wealth, and that her sensible straightforward nature had felt sufficient dislike of the man to refuse him in spite of his amiability.

. . . . .

The natural impatience with which Lahusen awaited the evening of the following day grew from hour to hour as the appointed time came and went without the news for which he was so anxiously waiting.

As the evening neared its end he sought to console himself by the thought that the official might not have wished to content himself with the telegram, and that the following morning would surely bring him a letter. He did not sleep at all that night, arose early the following morning and went to the post office before the usual delivery hour. There were but a few letters for him, none of them from Groth.

Lahusen staggered to the waiting room of the railway station, which was still quite empty, and tried to collect his thoughts. What should he do? Should he wait longer, or should he telegraph himself? Yes, he would do that. The gentlemen at the police station would not be surprised at his natural impatience.

He found a telegraph blank in the anteroom of the office,

went back into the waiting room and wrote the following: "Police Headquarters, Kiel. Please ask Commissioner Groth for news whether Gliczek has been arrested and stolen money saved." He signed his full name, paid for his telegram without heeding the astonished expression of the operator, and returned to his home.

The answer came just as he had seated himself for his breakfast. He opened the envelope hastily and read: "Christian Lahusen, Brügghofen. Commissioner Groth unknown here. No information regarding Gliczek robbery received. Police Headquarters, Kiel."

Lahusen staggered, handed the telegram to his daughter and explained it stammeringly. "Twice betrayed—by the thief and by his accomplice!" he groaned, as the full consciousness of the truth burst upon him.

Dorothea accompanied him to the telegraph station. "Was—was there a telegram sent to the police station in Kiel — yesterday morning early — sent by Commissioner Groth—about a robbery in my house?" he asked of the operator.

"Groth—a robbery in your house?" repeated the official, looking through the file of the last two or three days. "No, I can't find anything," he said finally.

Lahusen wired to Hamann & Son about the draft. The answer, which was received almost immediately, read: "Draft four thousand eight hundred presented yesterday morning by Baron von Waregg. Claimed to be your son-in-law and money paid to him. If any trouble, let us know. Hamann & Son."

"Of course, of course," groaned Lahusen. "The thief knew that he would be discovered, and he warded off pursuit and gained two or three days, by the help of his accomplice. A very clever trick! The two rascals are probably safe over the frontier with their booty by now!"

The news about the swindler Baron and the robbery ran like wildfire through the quiet village, and the peasants gathered in scores in the inn room. They talked, disputed, told of their own distrust and warnings, asserted that they

had known all about it all along, and shrugged their shoulders over the so easily deceived Lahusen. They were sorry for him, but they declared that his punishment had not been undeserved.

The real police, called in too late, took great interest in the affair. But all they could do was to declare that all the talk about the "marvel" and the "well-known international swindler" was an invention of the imaginative accomplice. There were no records of any such person on the police lists.

But Lahusen remembered his Baron for many a year, long after he had overcome the actual money loss. When he forgot himself and began to lay down the law to his friends at the inn, the shrewd peasants would receive his dictatorial advice with an amused smile, and would remark: "Not even the Pope is infallible, they say. Remember your Baron von Waregg, Christian."

Venice at the Period of "Andrea Delfin"

The scene and time of Heyse's "Andrea Delfin" are alike tragic. Venice was rarely a peaceful community in its early glory. But the years from 1750 on until nearly the close of the century saw the very blackest period. The Queen of the Seas had become a community torn by petty internal strife and jealousies.

Unsuccessful war had robbed the proud Republic of many of her possessions. Aggression from without could not be combated by a people harassed by tyranny within. Individual initiative was killed by despotism, industry and commerce suffered in consequence, and life in Venice offered nothing but the opportunity for political intrigue or private and public debauchery.

The Great Council, that splendid machinery of government, instituted in the early days of the Republic to secure the power to the Sovereign People forever, had come to be only an instrument in the hands of the nobility, helpless itself to control its own creature, the Council of Ten. This smaller council, at first merely a committee of the Great Council, chosen to act on certain special cases of urgency, had become the true seat of power, and with its own appointed committee, the Three Inquisitors of State, ruled Venice absolutely.

The Three Inquisitors were the final judges, and the mystery which surrounded their actions, *their very persons* even, made their rule a complete despotic tyranny, responsible to no one, sparing no one. No citizen of Venice was safe from interference in his most private affairs; open murder and secret assassination were the order of the day. The strife of the nobility among themselves rent the city asunder. A party of the older families, prominent since the earliest days of Venetian history, had been ousted from power by a younger faction which had captured the Council of Ten. They still held seats in the Great Council, but were powerless to control the Ten. Their jealousy broke out in constant petty rebellions which sharpened the tyranny of the Ten, and an era of oppression that would have done credit to the most despotic form of monarchy brooded over the nation calling itself a Republic. The absorption of power and wealth in the hands of the few meant poverty and loss of energy for the many, and the death knell of Venetian independence had sounded.—Editor.

Paul Heyse

Andrea Delfin

"Vengeance is mine, said the Lord"

ABOUT the middle of the last century there stood, in a side street of Venice, a quiet little street bearing the cheerful name "Della Cortesia," a simple one-story house. The Madonna was enthroned above its low portal, in a niche framed by wooden columns and quaint stone carvings. A tiny lamp, set in a globe of ruby glass, shone out before the statue day and night. Just inside the lower vestibule a steep staircase led to the upper rooms. On its higher landing another little lamp, hanging on chains from the ceiling, gave a dim light in the dark hall. In spite of the eternal twilight that reigned there, the staircase was the favorite place, for rest or work, of the owner, Giovanna Danieli. Since the death of her husband, Madame Giovanna had occupied the little dwelling with her only child, her daughter Marietta, renting some of the rooms she did not need to quiet, well-recommended strangers. Giovanna would explain her love for the stairs by saying that her eyes had become so weakened through weeping for her lost husband that they could no longer endure the full daylight. Her neighbors asserted that she enjoyed the opportunity her position on the stairs gave her for stopping those who went in or out, and chatting with them.

However this might be, her favorite place of sojourn afforded her little chance for amusement on the day and hour when we first make her acquaintance. It was an evening in August of the year 1762. For six months she had had no lodgers, and she was unlikely to have any visitors at so late an hour. Madame Giovanna had sent

her daughter to bed, and had settled herself on the stairs with a basket of vegetables beside her. But her hands rested idly in her lap, her head fell back against the railing, and she was just dozing off when three slow, heavy blows on the house door awoke her. She listened in alarm, not knowing whether she had really heard the noise. The blows of the knocker were repeated. Madame Giovanna shook her head, then walked slowly down the stairs, and asked through the crack of the door who demanded entrance at so late an hour.

A voice answered that a stranger stood outside who was looking for a room. The house had been recommended to him and he desired to remain for some time. His polite manner of speaking awoke Giovanna's confidence sufficiently to allow her to open the door. She saw a man in the quiet black garb of the middle-class citizen, holding a leather bag under one arm. His face attracted her attention. He was neither young nor old, his beard was dark brown, his eyes bright and fiery, his brow without a furrow. But around his mouth were lines of weariness and his close-cropped hair was quite gray.

"I regret to have disturbed you so late, my good woman," he said. "Tell me at once whether you have a room looking out upon the canal. I come from Brescia, and my physician told me that I must live near the water, as I need the moist air for my weak lungs."

"Fortune be praised!" exclaimed the widow. "My last lodger left me because his room was too near the canal; he complained that the water smelled as if rats had been boiled in it. They do say here in Venice that our canal water is a radical cure for all ills. But they mean it in the sense of the many times when the authorities send out a gondola to the lagoons with three passengers, and it returns with only two. God preserve us all! Is your passport in good order? Otherwise I may not take you."

"I have already shown it three times—in Mestra, in the police gondola outside the harbor, and at the Traghetto. My name is Andrea Delfin, my business that of scribe to

the notaries. I am a quiet man, and have as little to do with the police as possible."

"That is good hearing," said the little woman, leading her guest upstairs. "These are hard times, Ser Andrea. Is it not pretty here?" She opened the door of a large room and motioned him to enter. "The window there looks out upon the canal, and the other window opens on a little alley. But you must close that window on account of the bats. And across the canal there, so near that you could almost touch it, is the palace of Countess Amadei, who is as blond as yellow gold, and goes through as many hands. I will bring you light and water in a moment. Do you wish anything to eat?"

The stranger threw a quick, sharp glance about the room, went from one window to the other, and then threw his bag upon a chair. "This will do very well," he said. "We will soon come to an agreement about the price, I fancy. Bring me something to eat and a glass of wine if you have it."

His voice was gentle, but there was something of command in his manner. The woman left the room, and as soon as he was alone he walked at once to the window and leaned out, looking down at the narrow canal. The black water lay quiet, and opposite him rose the heavy mass of the palace, turning its front to the other street and showing him only a few dark windows. A narrow door opened almost under his window and a black gondola lay chained to the step.

All this seemed to please the stranger very much, particularly the fact that his other window looked out upon a blank wall, with no *vis-a-vis* to spy upon him. Below was a narrow courtyard, which seemed abandoned entirely to cats, rats, and birds of the night. A light from the hall brightened the room as the door opened and the little widow entered, bearing a candle. Behind her was her pretty young daughter, Marietta, carrying a tray upon which were bread, cold meat, fresh figs, and a half-filled bottle of wine. As the girl set the tray down upon the table she whispered

to her mother: "What a queer face he has! He looks like a new house in winter, when snow has fallen upon the roof."

"Be quiet, foolish child," whispered the mother quickly. "White hairs are oftentimes false witnesses. The gentleman is ill. Go and fetch the water now. He is very tired and will want to go to sleep." During these whisperings the stranger had sat by the window, resting his head in his hands. When he looked up, he scarcely seemed to notice the presence of the pretty girl, in spite of her polite courtesy.

"Come and eat," said the widow. "The figs are fresh and the ham is tender. This is a good wine which the Doge's own cellar keeper sold to my husband. You have traveled much, sir—have you perchance met my husband anywhere, Orso Danieli?"

The stranger had poured out a glass of wine and taken up one of the figs. "Good woman," he replied, "I have never been far from Brescia, and know no one of the name you mention."

Marietta had left the room, and her young voice was heard trilling a cheerful song as she ran down the stairs. "Just hear that child!" exclaimed Madame Giovanna. "She would rather dance and sing all day than do anything else. And it's ill singing here in Venice, where they say it's a good thing the fishes are dumb, because of the terrible things they might tell. But her father was just like that. My Orso was the best workman in Murano—where they make the colored glass. They say you can't find it anywhere else in the world. He had a gay heart, and he said to me one day, 'Giovanna,' he said, 'the air here chokes me. Just yesterday they hung a man because he dared to talk against the Council of Ten. Therefore, Giovanna,' said he, 'I'm off for France. I know my work, and just as soon as I've earned enough, you and the child can follow me.' He laughed when he kissed me good-by, but I wept, sir. Then a year later, sir, what do you suppose happened? The Signoria sent to me that I should write

him he must come back at once. No workman from Murano must dare to carry his skill and his knowledge into another country, they said. He laughed at the letter, but one morning they dragged me out of my bed, and took me with the child to the lead roofs—then they told me to write him again and tell him they would keep me there till he came himself. After that he wrote that he was coming. But I watched and watched, weeks and months, and oh, sir! my heart grew heavy and my head was sick—for it's hell out there under the lead roofs. And in the third month they let us out and sent us home, and told me that my Orso had died of fever in Milan. Others told me that, too—but I know the Signoria. Dead? Does a man die when he knows his wife and child are waiting for him under the lead roofs?"

"And what do you think has happened to your husband?" asked the stranger.

She turned her eyes on him with a look which reminded him afresh of the weeks she had spent under the dreaded "lead roofs." "Many a man lives and does not come back," she said. "And many a man is dead and yet he comes back. But it's best that I talk no more about it. How can I know that you may not repeat to the Tribunal what I am saying? You look like an honest man, but we trust no one in Venice to-day."

There was a pause. The stranger had pushed back his plate and was listening attentively. "I cannot blame you if you will not tell me your secret," he said. "But how comes it, my good woman, that you do not rebel?—you and all the others in Venice who have suffered so much at the hands of this Tribunal? I have troubled myself little with political questions, but I have heard that only a year ago there was an uprising against the Secret Tribunal, an uprising led by a member of the nobility. Then, finally, when the disturbance was quelled and the might of the secret judges stronger than ever, why then did the people rejoice and heap scorn upon the nobility? Why was there no one brave enough to protest when the Inquisitors sent

their rash enemy into exile in Verona? I know little about it, as I have said—but I think it strange that the people of Venice should complain of their tyrants, and then rejoice at the defeat of those who would put an end to the tyranny?"

The widow shook her head. "Then you never saw him, the Advocate Signor Angelo Querini, he whom they exiled? I saw him, sir, and many other poor people have seen him, and we all know him for an honest gentleman and a great scholar. But we could see also that he was a nobleman, and that all that he did and said against the Tribunal, he did and said not for the poor people but for the great gentlemen. But it's all the same to the sheep, sir, whether they are slaughtered by the butcher or eaten by the wolf. And therefore, the people rejoiced when the big thief hung the little one."

The stranger seemed about to answer, but contented himself with a short laugh. Marietta reëntered, bearing a pitcher of water and a little pan of sharp-smelling incense, which she held to the walls and ceilings to kill the flies hanging there in myriads. The women chattered gayly, but their new guest did not seem interested. He bade them a curt farewell when they finally turned to leave him, and when alone he sat for a long time motionless at his table. The shadows deepened in his face, and his whole figure was so quiet one might have thought him dead, had it not been for the wild fire in his eyes.

The clock from a neighboring church, striking the eleventh hour, aroused him from his thoughts. The sharp-smelling smoke of the incense still hung about the low ceiling; Andrea opened the window to clear the air. He saw a light in one of the windows opposite, and through the opening of a white curtain he could see a girl seated at a table eating and drinking. Her face had a care-free and light-hearted expression, although she was no longer in her first youth. There was something studied in the disorder of her dress and hair, something that was self-conscious but not unpleasing. She must have noticed that the

room opposite was occupied, but she continued her supper calmly. Then she set the empty dishes aside and moved the table with the lamp against the wall, that the light might fall on a tall mirror in the background. Whereupon she began to try on, one after the other, a number of fancy costumes which lay thrown about on the chairs. Her back was turned to the man opposite, but he could see her picture clearly in the mirror. And he could also see that the girl was watching his reflection sharply. As he remained motionless and she did not see the expected signs of applause for her appearance in her changing garb, she grew impatient. She took up a large red turban on which a heron's feather was fastened by a shining clasp. The vivid coloring looked well with her olive skin, and she made a deep bow to herself in the mirror. Then she turned suddenly and came to the window, pushing back the curtain.

"Good evening, Monsú," she said cheerily. "You are my new neighbor, I perceive. I hope that you will not play the flute all night as your predecessor did, keeping me awake thereby."

"Fair neighbor," answered the stranger, "I am not likely to disturb you with any sort of music. I am a sick man who is thankful if he is not disturbed himself."

"You are ill?" answered the girl. "Are you rich?"

"No. Why do you ask?"

"Because it is very sad to be ill and poor at the same time. Who are you?"

"My name is Andrea Delfin. I have been a scribe of the court in Brescia, and have come here to take service with a notary."

The answer seemed to disappoint her. "And who are you, fair maiden?" Andrea continued, with an interest in his tone belied by the expression of his face. "It will be a comfort for me in my suffering, to know that you are so near me."

This seemed to be what the girl was looking for, and she smiled as if pleased. "To you I am the Princess Smeraldina," she said, "and I will allow you to admire me from

a distance. When I put on this turban it is a sign that I am willing to chat with you. For I find many hours hanging weary on my hands here. You must know," she continued in a changed tone, "that my mistress, the countess, will not permit me to have a lover, although she changes her own lovers more often than she changes her gowns. If it were not that occasionally some pleasing stranger takes your room——"

"Who is the present lover of your mistress?" interrupted Andrea. "Does she receive the high nobility of Venice? Are the foreign ambassadors among her visitors?"

"They come to her masked, usually," answered Smeraldina. "But I know that young Gritti is her favorite now; she loves him more than I have ever seen her love anyone since I have been with her. She loves him more than she does the Austrian ambassador, who pays court to her until the others laugh at him. Do you know my countess? She is very beautiful."

"I am a stranger here, child. I have never seen her."

The girl laughed a sly laugh. "She paints her face, although she is not yet thirty. But you can see her easily if you wish to. I will arrange it some time. But goodnight now. I must go to her."

She shut the window. "Poor—and ill—" she said to herself as she drew the curtain. "Well, it is better than nothing."

The man opposite had closed his window also. "I might find that useful," he said to himself, with an expression which showed that there was no thought of love in his mind.

He unpacked his bag, and laid the few articles of clothing and the book or two which it contained in a cupboard in the wall. One of the books fell from his hand, and the stone on which it struck gave forth a hollow tone. Andrea put out his light at once, bolted his door, and commenced to examine the floor by the pale glimmer that came in through the window. In a few moments he found that it was possible to raise the stone, and beneath it he discovered a hole of considerable size. He removed his outer coat and

unbuckled a heavy belt with well-filled pockets, which had been fastened round his body. He was about to put it in the hole when he suddenly halted. "No," he exclaimed, "this may be a trap laid by the police. It is much too inviting to be safe."

He replaced the stone and sought for another, safer, hiding place for his secrets. The window looking out on the blind alley was barred, but the openings were large enough to admit of the passage of an arm. He felt about on the outer wall and discovered a tiny hole just under the sill. It could not be seen from below, and the window ledge hid it from above. He dug at the hole noiselessly with his dagger, and had soon widened it sufficiently to lay his belt in it. He examined it all closely when his work was done, to see that there was nothing of it visible, and then closed the window again. An hour later he was fast asleep, his lips tight set, as if fearing to reveal his secrets even in a dream.

The following day the newcomer arose early. He paused on the stair, where his landlady sat at her accustomed place, just long enough to inquire the way to the offices of several notaries whose names had been given him by a friend in Brescia. The widow looked at her guest in curiosity. He seemed so blind to everything about him, even to the young beauty of her Marietta. But in spite of his gray hair and the illness of which he had spoken, his step was quick and firm. His chest was deep and the color of his face was clear and youthful. Many a woman looked after him as he passed through the streets, although he did not seem to notice them in return.

Although Andrea had been so careful in asking directions from Madame Giovanna, when once out of his own street he threaded the net of alleys and canals as if quite at home there. Several hours passed in a vain search for work. In spite of the recommendations he had brought from Brescia, and in spite of the modesty of his manner, there was a certain look of pride in his carriage which

seemed to say that he considered the work he sought beneath his dignity. Finally, he found a position with a very low salary in the office of a little notary in a side street. The haste with which he consented to take the position made the owner of the office think that his new clerk was probably one of the many impoverished noblemen now trying to earn a livelihood by their own labor.

Andrea seemed quite satisfied with the result of his morning's work and entered the nearest inn, a haunt of the poorer classes, to take his dinner. He sat in a corner near the door and ate the simple food without complaint, although he did not seem to care for the wine after he had tasted it. He was about to pay for his food when his neighbor, whom he had not noticed hitherto, spoke to him. This was a man of about thirty years old, with curly blond hair, wearing the usual Venetian costume of quiet black, a garb which did not at once betray his Jewish descent. He wore heavy golden rings in his ears and jeweled buckles on his shoes, while his linen was far from clean and his clothes were unbrushed.

"You do not seem to like the wine, sir," he said in a low tone, turning to Andrea. "You have probably come here by mistake. They are not accustomed to serving guests of rank in this house."

"I beg your pardon, sir," replied Andrea quietly. "What do you know of my rank?"

"I can see by the way you eat that you do not belong to the class of those who come here daily," said the Jew.

Andrea looked at him sharply, then a sudden thought seemed to change his mood and impel him to meet the other with more friendliness. "You are a good judge of men," he said. "I have known better days, although I am the son of a small merchant and have studied law without any great success. But my father became bankrupt, and a poor scribe and lawyer's apprentice has no right to expect anything better than he can find in such a place as this."

"A scholar has always a right to demand respect," said the other with a polite smile. "I should be very glad to be of service to you if I could. I have always desired the company of gentlemen of learning. Might I suggest that you drink a glass of better wine with me?"

"I cannot afford better wine," said the other indifferently.

"I would look upon it as an honor to be allowed to show you our Venetian hospitality——"

Andrea was about to put an end to the conversation when he noticed the landlord beckoning to him from the back of the room. He noticed also that the other guests seemed much interested in his conversation with the Jew. With the excuse that he must first pay his account, he left his chair and walked to the table where sat the landlord. The old man whispered to him, "Oh, sir, be careful! That is a dangerous man. The Inquisitors pay him for prying out the secrets of all strangers who come here. I have to endure his presence to avoid trouble, but I can at least warn *you*."

Andrea thanked him, returned to his place and said to his officious neighbor, "I will go with you, sir, if you desire." Then in a lower tone, "I can see that they take you for a spy here. Let us continue our conversation elsewhere."

The Jew's face paled. "By God!" he said, "they wrong me. My business leads me in and out of many houses; but what do I care for the secrets that may be hidden there? However, I cannot blame these people for their watchfulness. The bloodhounds of the Signoria are in every street."

"But in my opinion, Ser— But what is your name?"

"Samuele."

"In my opinion, Ser Samuele, you think too hardly of those who are working for the good of the State, in that they discover all conspiracies against the Republic and frustrate them before they become dangerous."

The Jew stood still and caught at the other's arm.

"Why did I not recognize you at once? Since when are you in the service?"

"I? Since day after to-morrow."

"Are you mocking me, sir?"

"Most assuredly not. It is my serious intention to take service in those ranks. I am very poor as I told you, and the employment I have been able to obtain is miserably paid. I wish to better my condition."

"Your confidence honors me," said the Jew thoughtfully. "But the gentlemen do not like to take strangers into their service, until they have gone through with a trial apprenticeship. If my purse can be of any service to you during this time—I ask but very low rates of interest from my friends."

"I am grateful to you, but your protection and your recommendation are of greater service to me. This is my house, and I must leave you now, for I have much work to do. When I am needed, remember me: Andrea Delfin, Calle della Cortesia."

Andrea could not mount the stairs to reach his room without passing his little landlady, who, of course, was most anxious to know what he had done. She was far more discontented than he seemed to be at the position he had found. And she was much worried that he would not return to the streets, bright with sunshine, and enjoy the concert in the neighboring square. Even little Marietta, when she had brought him the supper he asked for later in the day, was too much abashed by the gravity of his expression to chatter as was her wont. "Oh, mother," she exclaimed, as she returned to the staircase, "I don't want to go into his room again. He has eyes like the martyr in the picture in the chapel. I can't laugh when he looks at me like that."

But little Marietta would have been very much surprised if she could have seen their guest several hours later. Under cover of the night, he stood at his window in lively conversation with the maid opposite.

"Fair Smeraldina," he said, "I could scarce await the

hour when I should see you again. As I passed the
smith's shop, I thought of you and bought you this b
It is not fine enough for you, but at least it is mo
than the clasp on your turban. Open the windo
will throw it over, in the hope of going the
myself soon."

"You are very gallant," smiled the girl, cat
tle package. "And what good taste you hav
of anything to make me rejoice to-day. It
day for us, for the countess is in a very
lover, the son of Senator Gritti, has no
and twenty hours. She sent to his h
ing from there also and it is feare
prisoned. The countess will see
sofa, weeping, and struck at n
her."

"Does no one know of v
cused?"

"I would be willing to tak
if that poor boy is found
the State. He was only
of nothing but the coun
But the gentlemen of
man's rope out of a c

"Speak more cautio
ties," said Andrea ge
gave them the power

The girl looked at
but it was not easy to
I pray you," she sai
been here but for a
some respect for the
quite reverend from
at the card table and
the rest of us."

"That may be,
have the power, an
myself to utter such

"You may say what you like here," said the maid. here are few windows looking out on the canal and ooms are empty at this hour. On your side there is g but a blank wall. But will you not come over our and drink a glass of wine with me? I have here which will make a bridge between our two Are you easily dizzy?"

eed, fair friend. Patience for a moment and ady to come to you." Andrea put out the door of his room, listened a moment, and indow. Smeraldina had her improvised tood beckoning to him. He sprang ill, looked down at the black water and with a single step had crossed im in her arms as he sprang down r lips touched his cheek. But anor, as if awed by the respect home. The girl drew in the ne from a cupboard, and the

erself the second glass of r guest for not drinking from somewhere in the cards angrily and rose ing it is, I haven't an a few moments, I will

ndow and looked care- his own window and nty feet in height and so many places that foothold for a good ace was immediately nd between the boat osite there was only

er myself," he mur- y at the dark waters

flowing between the blank walls. In the distance a pale light appeared, moving nearer, and in a little while the noise of oars floated up to him. A gondola came slowly down the stream and halted at the door below. The listener at the window drew back, but he could see a man step from the boat, and he heard three heavy blows of the knocker beneath. From within the house a voice asked who it was that demanded entrance.

"Open! in the name of the Mighty Council of the Ten!" was the answer. The door was opened and closed again behind the nightly visitor.

A few moments later, Smeraldina hurried back into her room in great excitement. "Did you hear it?" she whispered. "Oh! they have come to take our countess away!—They will kill her!—and who will pay me the six months' wages she owes me?"

"Be calm, dear child," he answered. "You will find good friends who will not forsake you. But I will be very grateful to you if you could hide me somewhere where I might hear what the Mighty Council has to say to your mistress. I am a stranger here and it would interest me greatly."

The girl thought a moment. Then she said, "I could do it easily—the hiding place is a good one—but suppose it should be discovered?"

"I will take it all upon myself, my dear, and no one shall know who let me into the house. Here is money, in case I may not be able to show my gratitude to you later. But if all goes well, you shall see that I am willing to divide the little I have with such a kind friend."

She slipped the money into her pocket, opened the door and looked out into the blackness of the corridor.

"Take off your shoes," she whispered. "Then give me your hand and follow wherever I may lead you. Everyone in the house is asleep except the doorkeeper."

She extinguished her lamp and slipped through the corridor, drawing him after her. They passed through several dark rooms, then entered a large dancing hall, dimly

lighted by a pale glimmer falling through the three high windows. On one side a staircase led up to a balcony for the musicians. "Have a care," warned the girl. "The steps creak. I will leave you alone now. You will find a crack in the wall up there, through which you can look down into the countess's reception room. But do not move from your place until I come for you."

She left him alone and he mounted the few steps and felt along the wall until he came to the crack. The neighboring room was separated from the great hall by a wooden partition only, as in earlier days the two had been one. Andrea knelt down and put his eye to the crack in the wall, through which a ray of light fell. Uncomfortable as his position was, there were many who would have been glad to change with him. A large silver candelabrum stood on the table, beside the divan upon which the countess lay. She was clad in a loose gown, which showed that she had not expected visitors at this hour. Her rich red-blond hair was caught up carelessly, her eyes, although reddened with weeping, still shone brilliantly. The man who sat opposite her in an armchair, turning his back to Andrea, seemed to be watching her sharply. He sat motionless, listening quietly to the angry words of the beautiful woman.

"I am astonished," said the countess, in a bitter tone. "I am astonished that you dare to show yourself here, now that you have so shamefully broken all your solemn promises to me. Is it for this that I have done you so many services? What have you done with him, with my poor friend, the only one I cared for—and whom you promised to spare, no matter what happened? Was there no other that you could find if your prisons are empty? Give him back to me or I will break off all relations with you—I will leave Venice and follow my lover in his exile. You will soon see what you have lost by this betrayal."

"You forget, countess," said the man, "that we have means to prevent your flight, or to find you wherever you might go. Young Gritti deserved his punishment. In spite

of our warnings, he continued to be seen everywhere with the secretary of the Austrian Ambassador, a young man who knows much too much. It was a sign of our paternal kindness toward him that we exiled him before he became more guilty. But we know what we owe you, Leonora. And therefore I have been sent to you to tell you of this, and to show you how all can be made good again if you will only be sensible."

"I am tired of taking orders from you," she said hastily. "I see now that it is impossible to have faith in you; I see now that it is useless to expect any return from you for all I have done. I want no more of you. I need you no longer."

"I am only sorry," he interrupted, "that we still need *you*. You will understand, Leonora, that it will not be possible for us to allow you, who know so many secrets of the Republic, to travel in foreign parts. You might fall a victim to the disease of the times, the desire to write memoirs. Venice and you are still inseparable, and you should by this time understand that it will not take us long to reconcile you."

"I want no reconciliation," she cried passionately, with tears in her eyes. "What would it mean to me?—I want nothing—I know nothing—but the one thought that I have lost my poor Gritti!"

"You shall have him back, Leonora. But not at once, for his sudden return would interfere with our plans."

"And how long must I wait?" she asked.

"That depends upon you," he answered. "How much time do you need to bring a young man to your feet? One who has a reputation for virtue?"

A gleam of interest brightened the despair of her face. "Of whom are you speaking?" she asked.

"I mean the young German who was Gritti's friend, the secretary of the Viennese minister. You know him?"

"I saw him at the last regatta."

"We have reason to believe that he is in communication with our opponents, and that he is utilizing the discontent

left by Querini's banishment for the good of his own sovereign. But he is very clever and we can obtain no proofs. For this we turn to you, Leonora; we want you to give us the key to the secrets of this well-guarded mind. We could hope for nothing from you as long as Gritti was here. His exile leaves you free and gives you an excuse for a nearer acquaintance with his friend. The rest I leave to the power of your charms, which are never greater than where they meet resistance."

She lay silent for a few moments; her eyes brightening, her beautiful mouth curving to a smile. "Then you promise to call Gritti back at once, when I have handed the other over to you?"

"We promise."

"You will not have to wait long then." She stood up and paced the room. Andrea could see her when she passed within the area commanded by the crack at which he sat. Her large, dark eyes, glancing upward, rested on his hiding place. He started involuntarily as if discovered. The man in the armchair stood up also, but seemed to be blind to her beauty, for he continued to talk in a businesslike tone:

"And one thing more, Leonora, the sum which we still owe you for the supper you gave Candiano——"

She started violently and changed color. "By all the saints," she exclaimed, "do not mention that again—give the rest of the money to the Church that they may read masses for his soul—and for mine. Whenever I hear that name, it sounds in my ears like the trumpet of the judgment day."

"You are a child," said the other. "The responsibility for that supper falls on us, not on you. Young Candiano was guilty of treason, but his connections and his high rank compelled us to punish him in secret. He died quietly in his bed, and no one could have imagined that he drank death here in your house. Or have you heard any rumors?"

She trembled and looked down. "No," she said; "but

in the night I awake with a start and some voice seems to call to me, 'You should not have done that—not that!'"

"It is your nerves, Leonora; you must conquer them. There is no one left who has the right to inquire into his death. His elder brother and his sister perished, as you know, by the burning of their home. The money is waiting for you whenever you wish to send for it. Good night, countess. I will not keep you awake any longer. Rest well, that the sun of your beauty may shine cloudless over the just and the unjust. Good night, Leonora!"

He bowed to her lightly and walked toward the door. For a fleeting moment Andrea could see his cold features. It was a face without a soul and without passion, illumined only by the expression of a mighty will. He put on a mask and threw a black cloak over his shoulder, then left the room. A moment later Andrea heard the girl's voice calling him softly. Like a man who has received a heavy blow he staggered down from the balcony and followed the maiden without a word. Her room was light again, the wine and cards stood ready on the table. But the man's face was darkened by heavy shadows, so black that it frightened even Smeraldina's careless nature. "You look as if you had seen a ghost," she said. "Take a glass of wine and tell me what you have heard. It passed off better than we expected."

"Oh, yes," he said, with forced calm. "The Ten are favorably disposed toward your mistress, and you are likely to receive your wages very soon. But they spoke so softly that I heard little, and I am very tired from kneeling on the hard boards. I will be better able to appreciate your kindness another time. To-night I must sleep." He sprang upon the board which she had laid across the window, and when he reached his own room he looked down into the canal, at the end of which the light of the disappearing gondola shone dimly. He called a good night over to the opposite window, and then disappeared into the darkness of his room, while Smeraldina endeavored in vain to ex-

plain to herself the strange contrasts in the behavior of her new friend.

A week passed and yet she had made very little advance in the conquest of her new neighbor. One evening after having won the favor of the doorkeeper, she let him in at the front door, led him through the house to the little portal over the canal and entered the gondola with him. He handled the oars himself, rowing slowly through the dark labyrinth of water streets until they reached the Grand Canal. But in spite of the *tête-à-tête* with Smeraldina, he did not seem to be in a very loving mood, and listened carelessly to her chattering comments on her mistress and the society in which she moved. From them he learned that for the last few days the secretary of the Austrian Embassy had spent long hours with the countess. The lady was in a better humor, and showered presents on her handmaiden. Andrea listened so inattentively that the girl did not object when he turned the boat and took the shortest way home. He drove the narrow gondola up to the steps, threw the chain around the post, and asked for the key which locked it. The girl was already in the doorway when her companion called out to her that he had unfortunately dropped the little key into the water. This seemed to annoy her; but with her customary carelessness she comforted him with the assurance that there was a second key somewhere in the house. As she let him out of the front door of the palace an hour later, he touched her cheek in a hasty kiss as he said good-by.

The next morning, he explained to his landlady that there was so much work in his new master's office that he had been obliged to spend the night there. This was the only time that he had asked for the key of the house. Usually he came home at twilight, ate a light supper and retired early. His landlady sang his praises to all her neighbors as a model lodger.

On the morning of the second Sunday after Andrea's advent in the widow's house, the little woman entered his room in great excitement. She was dressed in her best

clothes, as if just returning from church, but her face was drawn in emotion. He sat at his table reading, his face paler than usual, but his eye calm and quiet. "You are sitting here so quietly, sir!" she exclaimed. "And all Venice in excitement? Holy Jesus! To think that this should happen—and I thought that nothing more could occur here that would surprise me!"

"Of what are you speaking, good woman?" he asked in an indifferent tone.

She threw herself into a chair, breathless. "Would you believe it! Last night, between eleven o'clock and midnight, the noble Lord Lorenzo Venier, the highest of our three grand Inquisitors, was murdered on the doorstep of his own house!"

"Was he an old man?" asked Andrea calmly.

"Misericordia! you talk as if he had died in his bed! You are no Venetian, and you cannot understand what it means when an Inquisitor is murdered. But the most terrible thing about it is that on the dagger which they found in the wound were the words: 'Death to all Inquisitors!' That is no private revenge; that is a political murder, so my neighbor says. And it means conspiracy and revolution——"

"Have they any clew to the murderer, Madame Giovanna?"

"Not the faintest," answered the widow. "It was a dark, windy night; there was not a gondola to be seen on the Grand Canal, where his palace is. He came home alone through a side street, was struck down, and lived just long enough to arouse the doorkeeper. There was nobody to be seen. But I know what I know. You are a good man and you will not tell anyone if I say to you that I know the hand that shed this blood."

He looked at her firmly. "Say what you wish, I will not betray you."

She came close to him. "Did I not tell you that many a man may be dead and may yet come home? *He* could not forget that they threw his wife and child into the prison

under the lead roofs. But for God's sake, not a word of this." She looked about in the room and shivered. Then she continued in a whisper, "I heard queer noises last night—as if something were creeping up the walls—and splashing gently in the water—and there was a rattling at your window—and the bats in the alley flew about as if frightened, until long after midnight. I know what it was. *He* came—after he had done it—he came to greet us —because we had never said good-by to him."

Andrea's head was bowed as he said that he had slept so soundly that he had heard nothing in the night. He said also that it was best for her to repeat nothing of what she had told him, since it was a dangerous thing to have any knowledge of such a crime, even if committed by a ghost. Then he left the house and went out into the tumult on the street.

It was plain to be seen that some great excitement moved the minds of the crowds pouring toward St. Mark's Square from every direction. There was no singing, no laughing, nothing but sighs or whispered words and a steady crowding toward the center of the city. Andrea mingled with the stream, his hat drawn deep over his eyes, his hands crossed carelessly on his back. Now he entered St. Mark's Square, where the greatest crowd was gathered in front of the stately, ancient palace of the Doges. A company of soldiers was posted at the entrance, and no one allowed to enter who did not belong to the greater council. Upstairs, in the wide hall decorated by trophies of the great deeds of the Republic, the flower of Venetian nobility sat in secret conclave, and the crowd below were waiting to hear the decision. Andrea worked his way through until he had almost reached the palace, throwing a glance as he passed into the interior of the cathedral, which was filled to the last corner. In a few moments more he stood between the two high columns on the edge of the Piazetta Quay, watching the jam of black gondolas with their gleaming, steel-shod prows that flashed back the rays of the sun.

A large, open gondola, rowed by two servants in rich livery, flew past the quay. Under the canopy a lady lay carelessly inclining on the soft cushions, her head resting in her hand. Diamonds flashed from her red-gold hair; her eyes were resting on the face of a young man who sat opposite her, talking eagerly. She raised her head and looked out proudly at the crowd on the Piazetta. "The blond countess," Andrea heard the people behind him murmur. He turned with a shudder and found himself face to face with the Jew, Samuele.

"Where have you been all these days, sir?" exclaimed the latter. "I have been looking for you everywhere. If you will come with me I have much to tell you that may interest you." He called up a gondola and drew Andrea in with him.

"What have you to say to me?" began Andrea, "and where are you taking me?"

"Do not go to your notary to-morrow morning," said the Jew. "It may be possible that I shall fetch you for a more lucrative errand."

"What do you mean?"

"You know what happened last night? It is unheard of that now, twelve hours after such a murder here in Venice, there is no trace of the murderer. We will have lost our credit with the Signoria, with the people, and with all the strangers who expect our police here to work wonders. The Council of Ten are angry at such poor service. They will be looking for new helpers. And if you think still as you did ten days ago, you may soon find better work than that which you are doing for your notary. I know faces, and I can see that you have yours in your control. The man who can hide his own thoughts is the man to discover the thoughts of others."

"I am still of the same mind. But who is to decide whether I can be of use?"

"The Tribunal will question you; all I can do is to recommend you. They are now choosing the third man again. *I* would not take the position, no matter what they might

offer me. The inscription on that dagger was not made for amusement."

"But there is no doubt that the man who is chosen must accept the position? Or will he refuse?"

"Refuse! Do you not know that the Republic has a heavy punishment for any man who dare refuse office?"

They were now passing a broad stairway leading down to the water, about which a crowd of gondolas swayed and pushed. It was the Palazzo Venier, where the dead man lay. Andrea forced himself to appear calm, and inquired, "Have you business here, Samuele? or is it only curiosity to see the dead that brings you?"

"I am here on business," answered the Jew, "and it may prove useful to you to come with me. Do you know, I would be willing to wager that among all these who come here apparently to condole, there are not a few of our enemies. The murderer himself, perhaps, may be even now dismounting from one of these gondolas. He may be clever enough to know that he is safer here than anywhere else, for the police are searching everywhere—everywhere the slightest suspicion could fall." With these words, he sprang out of the gondola and held out his hand to Andrea. "Will it alarm you to see the dead?" he asked.

"No, indeed, Samuele," answered Andrea quickly. "Let us go upstairs and pay our respects to the great man; he was not likely to have received us so unceremoniously during his lifetime."

In the great hall of the palace the catafalque was set up under a high canopy. Tall cypresses reached to the ceiling, the candles on high silver candelabra flared in the breeze that came from the open balcony, and four servants in mourning livery held watch at the corners of the bier. The sharp profile of the dead man rose white from the black velvet of his shroud. Andrea recognized the features that he had seen, and cherished in his memory, from that short moment in Leonora's room. But no quivering of lips or eyes betrayed that the murderer stood beside his victim.

An hour later, Andrea returned to his home and heard from his landlady that the police had searched the room during his absence, but that they had found everything in good order. The little woman gave him much advice as to how to act in this dangerous time, when suspicion might fall upon one for the slightest carelessness. Early next morning, before he had arisen, Samuele entered his room. "If you are anxious to earn fourteen ducats a month," said the Jew, "come with me at once."

"Have they chosen the new Inquisitor?" asked Andrea.

"I believe so."

"And they have no clew to the conspiracy?"

"None at all. The nobility are much alarmed, and are shutting themselves up in their houses. The foreign ambassadors are sending, one after the other, their solemn assurances that they have had nothing to do with this deed. The Three will hold themselves more in secret than ever, and there will be a price set upon the head of the murderer which will make a poor man rich for the rest of his life."

When they reached the palace, Samuele knocked at a little door in the courtyard and was allowed to enter up a narrow stairway. After they had passed several armed sentries, they were ushered into an apartment of medium size, the windows of which were half covered by heavy curtains. Three men, in masks which almost hid their faces, were walking up and down engaged in a whispered conversation. A fourth man, unmasked, sat at a table, writing by the light of a single candle.

"Is this the stranger of whom you spoke?" asked the scribe.

"Yes, your honor."

"You may go now, Samuele." The Jew bowed and left the room.

There was a pause, during which the secretary of the Tribunal looked through several papers before him. Then he turned a sharp glance on the stranger and said: "Your name is Andrea Delfin. Are you related to the Venetian nobili of this name?"

"Not that I know of. My family have lived for many generations in Brescia."

"You live in the Calle della Cortesia, in the house of Giovanna Danieli. You desire to enter the service of the mighty Council?"

"I wish to offer my services to the Republic."

"Your papers from Brescia appear to be in good order. The notary with whom you worked there for five years gives you the name of a sensible and reliable man. But we know nothing of the six or seven years before you came to him. Were you in Brescia during that time?"

"No, your honor," answered Andrea quietly. "When I had exhausted my small patrimony, I was obliged to take a position as servant, and I traveled with my master."

"And your references?"

"They were stolen from me, with the bag which contained my entire property. I was tired of traveling and returned to Brescia. My various masters had utilized me for secretary work at times. Therefore I sought service with a notary, and your honor can see that my work was satisfactory."

He said all this in a quiet, modest manner, his head bent slightly forward. Suddenly one of the three masked men approached the table and Andrea felt piercing eyes resting upon him. "What is your name?" asked the Inquisitor, in a voice weakened by age.

"Andrea Delfin. Here are my papers."

"Remember that it is dangerous to deceive the High Tribunal. What if I should tell you that your name is —Candiano?"

A short pause followed these words—a silence so complete that the gentle ticking of the death worm in the walls could be heard. Four pairs of eyes were turned toward the stranger.

"Candiano?" he answered slowly in a firm voice. "Why should my name be Candiano? I wish that it might be, for as far as I know, the Candiano family are rich and

noble, and no one who bears this name need earn his bread with his pen."

"You have the face of a Candiano; your manner and bearing show a higher rank than these papers would give you."

"I cannot help the look on my face, noble gentlemen," answered Andrea calmly. "And as for my manners, I have endeavored to learn what I could from my various masters."

The other two Inquisitors had come nearer also, and one of them, whose red beard shone out under his mask, said in a low tone: "There is a resemblance, I confess, it is this, probably, that deceives you. But you know yourself that that branch of the family which was settled in Murano has died out entirely. The father was buried in Rome, the sons did not long survive him."

"That may be," answered the first. "But look at him, and say yourself if you would not think that it was old Luigi Candiano risen from his grave and grown younger. I knew him well enough." He took the papers from the table and looked through them carefully. "You may be right," he said finally. "The age does not agree. This man is too old for one of Luigi's sons. If he is born out of wedlock—then we need have no fear of him!" He threw the papers down again and retired with the others to the window. The steady glance of Andrea's eyes did not reveal the terrible weight that was lifted from his soul at this moment.

The secretary began again to question him, and discovered that he knew the French language and something of German. After a few moments' consultation with the three at the window, the secretary returned to the table and said: "You will be given the pass of an Austrian citizen born in Trieste. With this you are to go to the house of the Austrian ambassador, and ask for his protection, saying that the Republic threatens to exile you. This visit is to give you the opportunity of making the acquaintance of the secretary of the embassy. Your task

is to find out if any personal and secret relations exist between the Viennese court and the nobility of Venice. You are to make no change in your manner of life. We will pay you twelve ducats for the first months; if you prove yourself worthy, the sum will be doubled."

Andrea bowed as a sign that the arrangement was satisfactory. "Here is your German pass," said the secretary. "Your house stands next the palace of the Countess Amidei. It should be easy for you to make the acquaintance of her serving maid. We will pay you whatever expenses you may incur in doing this. Report to us whatever you may hear about the relations of the countess with Venetian noblemen. And one thing more," here the secretary opened a little box which stood upon the table. "Step nearer and look at the dagger in this box. There are large armor factories in Brescia. Do you remember ever having seen any work of this character?"

Controlling himself by a tremendous effort, Andrea looked into the little box, looked at the weapon which he knew only too well. It was a double-edged knife with a steel handle in the form of a cross. On the blade, still stained with blood, were carved the words: "Death to all Inquisitors!"

After a long pause he pushed back the box with a hand which did not tremble. "I do not remember to have seen this dagger, or one like it, in any shop in Brescia," he said.

The secretary closed the box and dismissed him with a gesture. Andrea walked out slowly past the sentries, through the echoing corridor, and not until he reached the stairs did he permit himself to sink down upon a seat. His knees trembled, cold drops shone on his forehead, his tongue clove to his palate.

Out on the open street again he threw back his head defiantly, and regained his usual calm, quiet demeanor. With an apparently careless eye he read a placard announcing the high reward set upon the capture of the murderer. Then he called a gondola and rowed to the palace of the Austrian ambassador. Just as he was about to leave his

boat, a tall young man standing before the door turned suddenly and exclaimed in delight. "Ser Delfin! how delightful that we should meet here! Do you not know me? Have you forgotten our evenings on the Garda Lake?"

"Is it you, Baron Rosenberg?" answered Andrea, taking the other's hand heartily. "Are you in Venice for some time?"

"Heaven alone knows for how long," said the other. "For you must know, dear friend, that I am now secretary to his excellency, the Austrian ambassador. I fear you may not wish to be recognized as an old acquaintance of mine?"

"I am not afraid," replied Andrea. "If I am not disturbing you, I would like a few moments' talk with you."

"Oh, then, you were coming to see me without knowing me? I am all the more glad to do whatever I can for you."

Andrea blushed and felt for the first time the humiliation of his disguise. The Austrian pass in his pocket seemed to weigh like lead; but the control that hard years had won for him did not desert him.

"I wish merely to ask for some information about a German firm," he said. "For I am here in Venice in the very modest position of scribe to a notary. But as I was nothing more in Brescia, and you still did not think me unworthy of your acquaintance and that of your mother, I am very glad to meet you again. You must first of all tell me of that noble lady, whose great kindness to me still lives fresh in my memory."

The young man led his guest up to a comfortable apartment, where Andrea's eyes fell first upon a large portrait hanging over the desk. He recognized the brilliant eyes and the shining hair of Countess Leonora.

His host pulled two armchairs to a window through which one looked out over a broad canal to the rear wall of an old church. "Sit down and make yourself quite at home," he said. "Can I offer you some wine or a sherbet? But you are not listening to me—you are looking at that picture. Do you know who it is—but who in Venice would not know it? Do not talk to me of this woman. I know

all they say of her and I believe it all, and yet I assure you in all seriousness, that even you yourself, if you could stand before her, would forget everything except joy that you are there."

"Is this picture your property?" asked Andrea after a pause.

"No. It belonged to a more fortunate man than I—a handsome young Venetian who had the good luck to be her favorite. The poor fellow was careless enough to become my friend, and this crime has been punished by banishment. And it is now *my* punishment to have this picture before me, and to see the eyes of the original clouded with tears for his sake."

He stood before the picture as he spoke, looking at it with sad eyes. Andrea looked at him, in his turn, with the deepest sympathy. The young man could not be called particularly handsome, but a mingling of youthful slenderness and manly gravity made him very attractive. Nobility and energy were shown in the grace of his tall figure. His guest exclaimed involuntarily: "And you—you too can love this woman, so unworthy of you?"

"Love?" answered the young German in a gloomy tone. "Who says that I love her?—that I love her as I have loved at home? Say rather that it is an obsession, that I wear her fetters with groaning and with gnashing of teeth; that I am ashamed of my weakness, and yet revel in it. I have never known before what joy it is to feel one's shoulders borne down by a self-chosen yoke, and to feel all one's pride crushed to the dust for a smile from such eyes. But I am tiring you. Let us talk of something else. How has the world gone with you since you left Brescia?"

"Talk to me rather of your mother," said Andrea. "What a woman she is! The very stranger even feels the desire to love and respect her as a mother."

"Ah! Yes! yes!" exclaimed the other. "Let us talk of her—it may free me from this evil spell that has fallen upon me. Would you believe that I could be so ungrateful as ever to forget what a mother she has been to me? Would

you believe that I have already received three letters from her, in which she implores me to leave Venice and return to her in Vienna? She feels that there is some evil waiting for me here—alas! she does not know how great the evil is that has already crossed my path—she does not know that nothing holds me here but a woman whose name I would not dare mention in her pure presence. But, no—it is not quite as bad as that. It would not be possible for me to leave my post just now. My chief, the count, believes that I am indispensable to him, and there is much to do at this moment. It may not be unknown to you that we have fallen into disfavor here. They have even gone so far as to blame us for Venier's murder, a deed which we all abhor! For, don't you think yourself," he continued eagerly—"don't you think yourself that it will be quite impossible to gain the evident object, the fall of the Tribunal, through a path of crime like this? The question of morals quite apart, is it at all possible that any conspiracy could remain sufficiently long undiscovered to make it at all of use?"

"Quite impossible," answered Andrea carelessly. "What three Venetians know, the Council of Ten knows. It is only strange that they were served so badly this time."

"And suppose that it *should* be possible to the conspirators to heap murder upon murder, until no one can be found who will take upon himself the dangerous honor of an inquisitor's office—what would be won by that? The pillars of a healthy State are undermined in Venice, and only the stern hand of tyranny can hold the rotten structure together for a short time longer. But you see how careless I am for a diplomat who would win his spurs in Venice! Here I know you only slightly, and I am already talking so freely to you! But I think I know something of character, and I do not believe that a mind like yours could ever bend to the service of the Signoria."

Andrea held out his hand to his friend. But in the same moment he turned and saw, several steps behind them, his colleague Samuele standing in the middle of the room. The

Jew had opened the door softly and walked quietly across the heavy carpet. He bowed deeply to Rosenberg, pretending not to notice Andrea. "Your honor will pardon me for entering unannounced, there was no lackey in the anteroom. I bring the jewels you asked for."

He pulled several boxes from his pocket and laid them carefully on the table with all the manner of the Jewish merchant, a manner he was careful to suppress in his other affairs. While the young nobleman examined the jewels, Samuele threw a meaning look to Andrea, who had turned from him and was looking out of the window. He knew what the Jew's appearance in this hour meant. The spy was set to watch the spy, the old hand was to encourage the novice in his trial venture.

When Rosenberg had chosen a chain with a ruby clasp, paid for it without bargaining, and dismissed the Jew with a gesture, he turned to Andrea again. "Do you know anything about that Jew?" asked the latter.

"Oh, yes, I know him. He is a spy set to watch us in our house by the Council of Ten. I am sorry for your sake that he should have come in just then. He saw me take your hand; I wager that in less than an hour your name will be in the black book."

Andrea smiled bitterly. "I am not afraid, my friend. I am a peaceful man and my conscience is clear."

Four days later, on a Saturday evening, Andrea asked his landlady for the key of the house. She praised his decision to make an exception from his usual rule and spend one evening out of doors. It would be worth while on this particular evening; the funeral ceremonies for the noble Lord Venier, in the Cathedral San Rocco, would be well worth seeing. Andrea replied that he would rather avoid the crowd, and that he preferred to take a gondola and row out toward the Lido.

He left the house and walked down the street in the opposite direction from that leading to San Rocco. It was already eight o'clock; a fine rain thickened the air, but did not prevent crowds of people from streaming in all

directions toward the great church across the canal where the funeral mass for the murdered Inquisitor was to be sung. Andrea paused in a dark side street, took a mask from his pocket and fastened it over his face. Then he walked quickly to the nearest canal, and sprang into a gondola, giving the order: "To San Rocco."

The stately old church was bright as day with the light of innumerable candles, and alive with the swaying movement of a tremendous crowd. A great silver cross stood at the head of the catafalque, and the coverings of black velvet bore the crest of the Venier family. The chairs arranged in a semicircle up through the entire depth of the choir were draped in black, and were filled by representatives of the entire Venetian nobility. Not one of them dared to be missing on this occasion, for not one of them wished to allow a doubt of the sincerity of his grief. On another row of seats sat the foreign ambassadors. Their number also was complete when the solemn sound of the trumpets from the height of the dome announced the beginning of the ceremonies.

Two men walked hastily, absorbed in eager conversation, through a side street which led under gloomy arcades to the square of San Rocco. They did not notice that a third man was following them, keeping closely to the dark shadows of the houses, his face and figure hidden by mask and cloak. The two who walked on ahead did not wear the mask. One of them was a gray-bearded gentleman of noble dignity of bearing; his companion, much younger, listened with respectful attention to what the elder man was saying.

And now they came past the spot where a bright lamp in a house window threw a sharp light out over the street. Their follower in his mask had come close to them and looked at them eagerly as the light fell on their faces. He could plainly see that the younger man was the Secretary of the Inquisition; and the face and voice of the older man had been seen and heard in the Chamber of the Secret Tribunal. It was the voice which had told Andrea Delfin that he was a Candiano.

"Go back at once," the older man was saying, "and finish this affair immediately. You may order the first hearing of the prisoners, for it is not likely that I will be able to return until midnight. If there is any immediate report to make, you may find me at the house of my brother-in-law when the ceremony is over."

They parted, and the elder man walked more quickly through the silent arcades toward the square. The music in the church was silent now, and thousands of eyes turned toward the pulpit where a white-haired feeble priest, the papal nuncio, was slowly mounting the steps supported by two younger clergymen. There was not a sound to be heard as the old man's weak voice arose in a solemn prayer.

The last echo of the amen had scarce rolled down from the domed roof when a murmur arose among the crowd at the portal, running rapidly through the length of the church until the entire assemblage was swaying uneasily as the surface of an ocean. All eyes were turned toward the great doors, from which the nameless terror had come. Torches waved across the dark square, and after a moment's breathless pause in the first birth of the excitement a hundred-voiced cry was heard: "Murder! Murder!"

A panic which threatened to tear apart the walls of the old church followed this sound. Nobles and plebeians, priests and choir boys, the guardians of the catafalque, thousands of men and women—all rushed blindly to the exit. The old man in the pulpit stood alone in quiet dignity, looking down upon the struggling crowd at his feet, and left his place only when the empty church showed him that his duty was over.

Outside on the open square the terrified crowd pushed and struggled toward one spot where gathered torches flared in wind and rain. A troop of the guards, called up in haste, stood about a motionless body lying at the entrance to a dark side street. By the light of the torches the blood was seen streaming from a wound in the side, and in the wound itself was a dagger with a steel cross for

a handle, a dagger which bore the words: "Death to all Inquisitors."

. . . . .

The effect on Venice of this terrible discovery resembled the effect of the second and fatal shock of an earthquake. The first shock had caused surprise and terror—a terror which the very suddenness rendered fleeting, as the realization of what had happened could not penetrate the consciousness so quickly. But this second shock brought full comprehension. It was not possible to conceal the fact that the wounded man was one of the Three. This time the dagger had been turned aside by a heavy undergarment, and the victim was not dead. But the injury was very serious, possibly fatal, and caused a pause in the business of the Secret Tribunal, as the consent of all three members was necessary for every decree. Worse even than this laming of the power of government was the apparent penetrating of the secrecy which surrounded all its acts and which surrounded the very personality of its possessors. The choice and election of the third Inquisitor had been carried out in the Council of Ten with the utmost secrecy protected by the most solemn oaths, and yet a few days later a blow had struck down the newly elected Inquisitor. The thought lay near that treason must dwell in the very innermost circles of the government itself. The Secretary of the Inquisition, the last person to see the wounded man before the attack, was arrested, submitted to the most severe examinations, and threatened with a terrible death. But all in vain.

Venice was practically in a state of siege after this second attack. Half the city was in the service of the government to watch the other half. The streets were patrolled day and night; the wearing of masks, or the carrying of weapons of any sort, was forbidden under pain of severe punishment; and every gondola that landed passengers at the quays was inspected. No one was allowed to leave Venice, and a ship at the entrance to the harbor held up even the messengers of the government. Far beyond the limits of

the city the news of these conditions spread like a panic. Anyone planning a journey to Venice postponed it indefinitely. Merchants having business connection with Venetian houses withdrew their orders until the Reign of Terror should have passed over. Inside the town, the nobles left their houses only under pressure of dire necessity, and refused to receive visitors, as it was impossible to know that one's nearest friends might not be concerned in the conspiracy. Even the common people, usually unconcerned in the quarrelings of the higher powers, felt the increasing gloom of the nameless terror that had seized upon the entire town.

Among the few people who did not allow the panic to influence their thoughts or actions was Andrea Delfin. The morning following the deed he had been ordered to the palace and put through an examination as to what he might have seen and heard during the hour of the attack. He had said that he had been out on the Lido, endeavoring to discover the opinions of the fishermen. His friend Samuele had at once reported his noticeable friendliness with Baron Rosenberg. Andrea explained this by his former acquaintance with the young secretary, which could only be of use to the Tribunal.

He spent some part of every day with his German friend, as the two men had begun to find more and more real pleasure in each other's society. The baron told Andrea laughingly that he had been warned against him as a secret spy of the Tribunal. But Andrea's calm answer gave the other an assurance which was scarcely needed, as his confidence in his Italian friend was complete.

One day, as Andrea was leaning over the edge of a railing looking down at the quiet waters of the canal, some one called his name from a gondola, and he saw Baron Rosenberg waving eagerly to him from the cabin. "Have you an hour free?" cried the young man. "Then come with me. I am in a hurry, but want to speak to you." When Andrea had entered the boat the baron continued, pressing his friend's hand warmly, "I am very glad indeed to have

met you. I would have been very sorry to have had to depart without bidding you good-by, but I feared for your sake to visit you or even to send for you."

"You are going away?" asked Andrea, startled.

"I must. My dear mother is worrying about me. I have a piteous letter from her begging me to return. Her physician tells me that I must be with her or she will fall seriously ill. Here is the letter."

When Andrea had read it he returned it to the other, saying: "It is indeed touching, and yet I could almost wish that you would not go just now. Not alone because I shall be so utterly solitary when you are gone—but it is not safe now for anyone to leave Venice. For you to do so would be to incur suspicion of flight. Have you had any difficulty in obtaining permission to leave?"

"Not the slightest. But how could they prevent me? I am a member of the embassy."

"Then you have a double reason for caution. Many a door stands invitingly open here in Venice which leads to an abyss beyond. If you will follow my advice, you will not show yourself so openly in the streets the last hours before your departure. You cannot tell what may be done to prevent your going."

"But what can I do?" asked the young man. "You know it is forbidden to wear masks."

"Then stay at home, and let the representatives of the Republic wait in vain for your farewell visit. When do you leave?"

"To-morrow morning at five. I expect to be away about a month. Now that I have fully decided to go, I am almost glad of this heroic treatment, although it hurts me cruelly. When I am far away from the fatal charm of the enchantress, I may be able to throw off the spell of her power forever. And yet, would you believe me, dear friend, I tremble at thought of parting."

"The best cure for that would be to part from her at once."

"You mean not to see her again? You ask too much."

Andrea caught the other's hand. "My dear friend," he said with more tenderness than he had ever shown before, "I have no right to ask any sacrifice of you. But the deep affection that has drawn me to you from the very first gives me the courage to make a request of you. I beg of you, by the memory of your noble mother, do not go to the countess's house. I have a premonition, strong enough to be almost a certainty, that some terrible evil will befall you if you see this woman during the last hours before your departure. Promise me, I beg of you, promise me!"

Rosenberg shook his head gravely. "Do not ask a promise of me; be content that it is my will to follow your advice. But the demon may be stronger than I am myself."

They sat silent for some time while the gondola moved gently through the quiet waters. Near the Rialto, Andrea caused the boat to halt, as he would be obliged to leave his friend here. He started and trembled slightly at the other's question whether he would still be in Venice a month later. He held his friend's hand for some time, and stood looking at the boat long after it had moved on.

Andrea Delfin had long since cut himself loose from all ties that could bind him to another personality; the terrible task that he had set for himself had seemed to kill all human instincts within him. But he himself was astonished at the pain the parting from this young man awoke in his heart. He found himself wishing that he might not see him again until his work was done. He decided to write to the mother and warn her not to allow her son to return to Venice. The thought seemed to cause him great relief, and he hurried home to carry out his intention at once. But alone in his gloomy room he could not control the unease and distress that kept him pacing up and down the narrow space. He knew that the softening of his heart did not come from any twinge of conscience or from any fear of the discovery of his terrible secret. That very morning he had been called before the Secretary of the Tribunal and had seen how complete was the panic of the government.

The wounded Inquisitor still lay between life and death. One blow more and the building with its undermined foundations must fall forever. Andrea felt no doubt as to his mission, no doubt as to the protection of Providence for his work. It was a something else, a vague premonition he could not understand, which made him uneasy now and would not allow him to regain his usual iron composure.

The tenor of his thoughts was interrupted as twilight fell by a sound at Smeraldina's window opposite. He had neglected the girl lately, and now hastened to make up for this with particular friendliness, as he found the connection too useful to lose. Smeraldina was soon reconciled, and told him that her countess was expecting a number of gentlemen to play cards that evening.

"Is the German baron coming, the one you told me of?" asked Andrea.

"He? Why, of course not. He is so jealous that he will never enter the house if he knows anyone else is here. Besides, he is going away—and we are not sorry."

Andrea breathed a sigh of relief. At ten o'clock, as arranged, he stood before the portal of the palace waiting for the girl to let him in. The air was thick, the night cloudy, and the few passers through the little square wrapped themselves in their cloaks. As Andrea stood and waited, he remembered the evening that another Candiano had crossed this threshold to meet his death. He shivered, and the hand he held out to the girl a moment later was icy cold. Once in her room he would not consent to sit down at the richly spread table she had prepared, but persuaded her to allow him to look through the crack in the wall once more, pretending great curiosity to see what a card party among rich people might be like. He spoke jokingly, and protested that he would return to her very soon.

When he had taken his uncomfortable position on the little platform and looked down at the neighboring room, he would scarcely have recognized it again. Tall mirrors reflected the light of many candles, and their golden frames

shot out flashes that awoke answering gleams from the painted walls. Jewels sparkled on the white throat of the fair Leonora, but her eyes were tired and rested with indifference on the cards and on the faces of the young men about her. The money passed rapidly from hand to hand at the card table. One young gallant, weary of the game, sat on a divan singing sentimental barcaroles to the accompaniment of the lute, while servants passed noiselessly over the thick carpet carrying trays of refreshments. The watcher on the platform was about to retire, seeing nothing to interest him, when one of the great doors was suddenly opened and a stately figure entered the card room, greeted by a sudden respectful silence. It was a man past middle age, carrying his white head still proudly erect on stalwart shoulders. He threw a quick glance over the young men and bowed to the countess, as he prayed her not to allow him to disturb the company.

"You are asking too much, Ser Malapiero," answered the countess. "These young men have too much respect for the many services you have rendered the Republic that they should continue their sinful pastime in your presence."

"You mistake, fair Leonora," said the newcomer. "I have long since retired from all political activity, and find myself still young enough at heart to wish to enjoy a merry hour over cards and wine in the presence of beauty. But I do not come to-night to lay claim to your hospitality. I stepped in for a moment to bring you news of your brother, news which I have received from Genoa to-night. It is good news, and will not spoil your mood, therefore I feel free to ask for a few moments of your time. May we step in here?" He pointed to the door of the great hall.

Andrea started up, but realized that it would be impossible for him to leave his place without being seen. With quick decision he laid himself flat on the floor of the platform in a position which enabled him to hide behind the low railing. He heard the opening of the door, the rustle of the countess's gown and the step of the old man who

followed her, asserting that he did not need a light for the few words he had to say. The door closed behind them, and they stood just below the platform.

"Why do you come here?" asked the countess hastily. "Do you bring me the news that Gritti will return?"

"You have not fulfilled the conditions, fair Leonora. You have not revealed to us any of the secrets from Vienna."

"Is it my fault? I did everything a woman could do, and this stubborn German is absolutely my captive. But not a word of business would pass his lips—and he is going away to-day, as you know. I am ill of annoyance over the whole matter."

"It would be more agreeable to us if it were he who were ill."

"What do you mean?"

"He is going away, and it is not possible for us to stop him. But we are quite certain that he has important messages to carry to Vienna, and he must be prevented from reaching there. It is you who can hold him."

"And how?"

"Send him a messenger to come to you at once. He will surely come. And when he does, it must be your care that he shall fall ill."

She interrupted hastily. "I have vowed never to do that sort of thing again."

"You will receive absolution. And we do not wish that he shall die; in fact, that would make it very disagreeable for us."

"Do what you will," she said, "but leave me out of it."

"Is this your last word, countess?"

"It is."

"Well, then, it will have to be arranged that the traveler shall meet with an accident on his journey."

"And Gritti?"

"We will speak of him another time. Permit me to lead you back to your guests."

The door of the hall opened and closed behind them.

Andrea could now leave his post without danger, but the words he had heard lamed him in mind and body. He arose with difficulty and staggered down the steps, his hand clutching at the dagger hidden in his coat. His lips were bleeding where his teeth had pressed them. But he had sufficient control to rejoin Smeraldina, to chat with her for a few moments, leave her the contents of his purse, and then ask her to lay the bridge to his window again. As he crossed the plank with a steady foot, a decision stood firm within his soul. It was time for action again; action that had for incentive not alone the great cause to which he had devoted himself. He must strike, and strike well, to save a friend from treachery, to send a son safe home to a waiting mother.

He walked softly through the corridor of his own house and out into the quiet street until he reached the little square in front of Leonora's palace. He had seen no waiting gondola anywhere, and concluded from this that the man he sought intended to go home on foot. The black shadow of a column near the door gave him sufficient shelter.

He stood here, his dagger firm in his hand, watching and waiting. In his heart and brain the vague voices that had troubled him before were alive again. Cold drops stood out on his forehead—with a sigh of relief he thought to himself that this might be the last time. It occurred to him that Malapiero would probably be accompanied by lackeys, and he was astonished at the feeling of relief it gave him to think that it would be useless to wait this time. But just as he was about to move from his shadow, the door of the palace opposite opened and a single stately figure wrapped in a cloak stepped out into the black night. White hair fell from under the hat rim, a quick, firm step beat the stone pavement as the belated wanderer kept close to the shadow of the houses. Now he had approached the blackness where stood the avenger; he had passed him ten or twenty steps;—suddenly he heard a footfall behind him; he turned, threw back his coat to free his sword, but in the

same moment he staggered and fell—the steel had struck to his heart.

"Mother! my poor mother!" groaned the murdered man. Then his head sank back on the pavement, and his eyes closed forever.

A deep silence followed the words. The dead man lay stretched across the street with arms outthrown. His hat had fallen back from his forehead, and under the disguise of the white wig curly brown hair appeared, the youthful face seemed sleeping in the pale night light. A step or two distant, the murderer stood leaning against the wall of the nearest house, his eyes staring wildly at the face opposite him; his tortured brain trying to pierce the spell of ghostly enchantment that seemed to hold it enthralled. *Must* he not see in this face the features of the old man he had watched a few moments before in Leonora's hall? Was it not just because of the man who lay here that he had struck the blow? And what was it that the man there had said as he fell? The blood rushed back from his head to his heart. His eyes, suddenly clearing, could plainly see the dagger in the dead man's breast. He read aloud the words on the handle, words that his own hand had graven in the steel: "Death to all Inquisitors!" The thoughts whirled through his brain in hideous haste. He suddenly understood—it was no miracle, this hideous thing that had happened. It was all quite natural. The boy had remained away from his enchantress throughout the day, but when evening came he could no longer resist the spell of the demon and had come to her door. At the portal they had told him that the countess was not alone, and he had turned to leave the house again. And then it was that his only friend in all the city had sprung upon him to murder him —to murder him because of the disguise which this very friend had advised!

The door of the palace opened again, and a tall figure wrapped in a cloak came out into the street. The light from the vestibule fell on the white hair of Ser Malapiero returning to his home. Andrea looked up, the horrible

irony of his position cutting deep into his soul. There walked the man from whom he had thought to free the city, to free the helpless, oppressed citizens, and to free his own friend. This man walked toward him alone, unguarded save in the mask of a secret which his enemy had penetrated—there was nothing to turn aside the dagger that was aimed for his heart—but this dagger was stained with innocent blood, the Judge and Avenger equally sinful with those whom he had condemned. There was no difference between them, except that the one had been impelled by evil chance, the others by evil intention.

All this whirled through Andrea's brain. He started up, drew the dagger from the wound and fled through the shadow before the aged Triumvir had seen him. As he ran, his heart was torn by the agony of the thought that Malapiero would find the dead man, and would breathe a thanks to the unknown murderer who had relieved him of a dangerous and difficult task.

. . . . .

It was long past midnight when a man sprang out of a gondola and knocked at the door of a lonely convent that stood on a little point of land far out beyond the city. In the convent dwelt a few Capuchin monks who lived on the charity of the surrounding fishermen, and in return gave them spiritual aid and comfort. The solitary man, Andrea Delfin, knocked more loudly at the door. A moment later a voice from within asked who it was.

"A dying man," he answered. "Call brother Pietro Maria if he is in the convent." The doorkeeper retired, and Andrea sat down on the stone bench beside the house, took a notebook from his pocket and began to write hastily.

This was what he wrote:

"*To Angelo Querine:* It is a doomed man who writes to you now, a doomed man to whom your noble deeds gave courage to dare to resist the tyranny which had crushed out his entire family. Do you remember young Candiano, who many years before was introduced to you in the Pa-

lazzo Morosini? I was then a young man living the customary life of pleasure of my kind, thinking neither of the past nor the future. It was you who first reminded me of the great deeds my forefathers had done in service of the State; it was you who first led me to study the history of my poor country and to understand how terribly this Republic of Venice had fallen, through a tyrant's hand, from her once high estate. Inspired by you, I won my brother Orso from his life of idle pleasure, and it was thus we drew down upon ourselves the vengeance of those who held the power.

"I will not trouble you with a recital of the means that were taken to crush out our family, as well as many others of the independent landed nobility. Enough to say that my brother died by poison, my sister perished in the flames that destroyed our home, and I was supposed to have shared her fate. But I had escaped, how I do not know, and by sheerest accident I had found papers belonging to one of my servants. This afforded me a possibility of allowing the belief in my death to spread abroad while I could sink my personality in that of another. My hair had grown white in a single night, my features aged as if by many years.

"When I recovered from the deep apathy into which the loss of all those dear to me had sunk me, I had but one thought, that of vengeance. Then came — I was living quietly in Brescia under the name of my servant — then came the news of your noble deed and its shameful defeat. I gathered my broken energy together, waited for a while to strengthen my hatred and my purpose, and then set forth to carry out in secret, by my own hand *alone*, the work which you could not perform by an open appeal to justice. I felt assured that there was no hatred in my soul for any one person, no desire for revenge for personal suffering, nothing but the sacred will to raise my hand in the avenging of the sorrows of my country.

"But it is for God alone to mete out vengeance—I would have played the judge and have become a murderer. I

took upon myself that which belonged alone to God, and God has punished me with my own weapons, and has allowed me to shed innocent blood. It is not yet time for a task such as mine—God has refused the sacrifice that I would bring him.

"I go now to meet the face of the Highest Judge, that he may pass judgment upon my sin and my suffering. I have nothing more to expect of mankind. Of you I pray only a passing pity for my error and my unhappiness.

"CANDIANO."

Long before the writer had finished, the door of the convent had opened and a venerable monk stood behind him. Andrea arose. "Pietro Maria," he said. "I thank you that you have answered my call. Will you grant one more request to an unhappy man, and take this letter safely to the exile in Venice? Will you promise me?"

"I promise you."

"God will reward you. Farewell."

He turned away without taking the hand the monk held out to him, entered his gondola and steered toward the open sea. The old man, who had hastily read the lines on the page before him, called after him in alarm and begged him to return, but received no answer. Greatly moved and excited, the venerable monk stood watching the last scion of a noble family pass out over the waves, which began to dance before the fresh morning breeze. When the gondola was near the gray horizon the dark figure in it rose to its feet, threw back a farewell look over land and sea, and toward the dim outlines of the city just visible above the mists of the lagoons. One moment it stood motionless, then with a spring it disappeared beneath the waves.

The monk who watched folded his hands and prayed silently. Then he loosened his boat from its chain and rowed out into the sea where the empty gondola danced on the crest of the waves. There was no trace of the man who had taken it out to this lonely spot.

Wilhelm Hauff

The Singer

I

"IT is a strange occurrence, truly," said Councilor Bolnau to a friend whom he met on Broad Street in B. "You must confess that this a queer age we live in."

"You mean the affair in the North?" answered his friend. "Have you important news, councilor? Has your friend, the foreign minister, told you some important secret of state?"

"Oh, don't bother me with politics or state secrets; let them go as they may. I mean now the affair of Mademoiselle Bianetti."

"The little singer? Has she been engaged again? They say the conductor of the orchestra has quarreled with her——"

"But for heaven's sake!" cried the councilor in astonishment, "where have you been hiding yourself that you do not know what all the city knows? Have you not heard what has happened to our little Bianetti?"

"Not a word, on my honor. What is it, then?"

"Nothing further than that she was stabbed to death last night."

The councilor was known as a great joker. When he made his usual morning promenade up and down Broad Street, it was his habit to stop his friends and tell them some wonderful story. This particular friend, therefore, was not much shocked at such terrible news. Instead, he answered calmly: "Is that all you know to-day, Bolnau? Your imagination must have given out if you exaggerate to this extent. When you stop me another time, have something

more sensible to tell me. Otherwise, I shall turn down another street if I see you in the distance."

"He won't believe me!" cried the councilor. "He won't believe me! If I had told you that the Emperor of Morocco had been stabbed, you would have received the news with gratitude and would have carried it further, because such news from Morocco is nothing unusual. But if they kill a singer here in B., nobody will believe it until they see the funeral. But, my dear friend, it is true this time, as true as that I am an honest man."

"Man! Think of what you are saying!" cried the friend in horror. "Dead, you say? Mademoiselle Bianetti dead?"

"She was not dead up to an hour ago, but I heard that she was in a very bad way."

"But tell me more, for mercy's sake! Are we in Italy, then, that people can be stabbed to death here in our city? Where is our police?—how could it have happened?"

"Don't scream so, good friend," replied Bolnau soothingly, "people are looking at us from the windows. How it happened, you ask? That is just the point—no one knows how it happened. Yesterday evening the young singer was at the masked ball, as charming and amiable as ever, and at twelve o'clock last night Court Physician Lange was awakened from a sound sleep and told that Signora Bianetti was dying of a knife wound. The whole city is talking of it—rank nonsense, of course. There are several circumstances which make it difficult to find out the truth. For instance, she will allow nobody to enter her house except the doctor and her own serving people. The court knows the news already, and the order has been given that the watch should not go through that street. The entire battalion makes the detour over the market place."

"You don't say so! But does no one know how it could have happened? Have they no clew at all?"

"It is difficult to pick out the truth among the many rumors that are going about. Our little Bianetti is a very decent girl, one must acknowledge. There is nothing that

could be said against her reputation. But people are malicious, particularly our dear ladies. If one mentions the respectable life the poor girl leads, they will shrug their shoulders and hint that they know of all sorts of things from her past. Her *past*, dear Lord! The child is scarce seventeen years old, and has been here for a year and a half. What chance is there for a past there?"

"Do not linger so long on the preface," interrupted his friend, "but come to the main theme of your story. Do they know who stabbed her?"

"Why, that is just the point, as I have already told you. People insist that it is some rejected lover, or else a jealous lover, who has tried to kill her. There are strange circumstances surrounding the case. They say that at the ball yesterday evening she was seen talking for some time with a masked man whom no one knew. She left the hall shortly after that, and there are those who claim to have seen that the man drove away with her in her carriage. This is all that anyone knows for a certainty. But I will soon find out how much truth there is to it."

"Yes, I know that you have your own channel for news. You have probably secured some one among those surrounding the signora who will keep you aware of everything that happens. People call you the city chronicler."

"Too much honor," laughed the councilor, and appeared flattered. "But this time I have no other spy than Dr. Lange himself. You must have noticed that, quite contrary to my usual custom, I am not promenading up and down the length of the street, but am confining myself to this block."

"I have noticed it, but I thought you were endeavoring to attract the eye of the fair Madame Baruch."

"Do not talk to me of the Baruchs! We broke off with them three days ago. My wife says that Madame Baruch plays for too high a stake. No, Dr. Lange comes through this street every day at twelve o'clock on his way to the Palace. I am standing here to catch him when he comes around the corner."

"Let me remain with you," said his friend; "I want to hear more about this affair."

"Oh, my dear friend, don't take the trouble to do that," replied Bolnau. "I know that you dine at twelve o'clock; do not allow your soup to grow cold. And, furthermore, Lange might not talk so freely before you. Meet me this afternoon in the café, and I will tell you everything. But go now—there he comes around the corner."

II

"I DO not consider the wound to be necessarily fatal," said Court Physician Lange, after the first greeting. "The knife was not held very securely in the hand that dealt the blow. She is conscious again, and, apart from the weakness which has followed the great loss of blood, there is no immediate danger."

The councilor put his arm through the doctor's, and answered: "I am very glad to hear that. I'll walk with you these few blocks to the Palace. But do you tell me something more about this affair. No one seems to know anything definite about the manner in which it happened."

"I can assure you," said the other, "the whole affair is shrouded in the deepest mystery. I had just fallen asleep when my Johann awakened me with the news that I had been sent for to come to some very sick person. I threw on my clothes and ran to the next room, where I found a pale and trembling girl who whispered to me that I was to bring bandages with me. This began to attract my attention. I entered the carriage hastily, told the maid to sit on the box with Johann to show him the way, and we drove to Lindenhof. I got down before a small house, and asked the maid who the sick person was."

"I can imagine how astonished you were——"

"When I heard that it was Signora Bianetti! I only knew her on the stage—had seen her there scarcely two or three times. But the mysterious way in which I had been

called to her, the bandages I was told to bring, all this aroused my curiosity greatly. We mounted a short stair and went through a narrow, dark hall. The maid led the way, left me there in the darkness a few moments, and then returned sobbing and even paler than before.

"'Come in, please, doctor,' she said. 'Alas! I fear you are come too late—she will not live through it.' I entered the room. It was, indeed, a terrible sight."

The physician was quiet a moment, his face darkening. He seemed to be looking at some picture which depressed him. "Well, and what did you see?" cried his companion, impatient at the interruption.

"I have seen many things in my life," continued the doctor, after a pause—"many things that have alarmed me, many things that have aroused my pity; but I have seldom seen anything that so touched my heart as did the sight that met my eyes there. In a dimly lighted room a pale young woman lay stretched out upon the sofa. An old servant knelt beside her, holding a cloth to her heart. I came nearer; the head of the dying woman lay thrown back, white and fixed as the head of a statue. Her long black hair, her dark eyebrows and lashes formed a terrifying contrast with the startling whiteness of her forehead, her face, and her beautiful rounded throat. The full folds of her white garments, which were doubtless part of her masquerade costume, were stained with blood. There was blood upon the floor and upon the sofa, blood that poured out from her heart in a crimson stream. This was what I saw in that first moment. Then I recognized that it was the singer Bianetti."

"Oh, how very touching!" said the councilor, much moved, and wiping his eyes with a large silk handkerchief. "She lay just like that a week ago when she sang 'Desdemona.' The effect was so alarmingly real, one could almost think that the Moor had really killed her. And to think that such a thing should in very truth happen to her!"

"Did I not forbid you to allow yourself to become ex-

cited?" interrupted the physician; "do you want to bring on another attack?"

"You are right," said the councilor, putting his handkerchief back in his pocket, "you are right—my constitution does not permit me any excitement. Continue to tell me what you know, and I will count the window panes in the War Office as we pass; that helps to calm me."

"If that doesn't help, you might take the second story of the Palace also.

"The old servant removed the cloth, and to my astonishment I saw a wound very near the heart, which had evidently been made by a knife or a dagger. There was no time to ask questions, however much I may have wished to do so. I examined the wound, and bound it up. During the operation the wounded girl had given no sign of life except that she had started and quivered when I probed the wound. I let her rest just as she lay, and watched her slumbers carefully."

"But the two serving maids—did you not question them about the wound?"

"You are my good friend, councilor; therefore I will confess to you that when I had bound up the wound and could do no more for the moment, I told the servants that I would do nothing more for the lady until they gave me some explanation as to what had happened."

"And what did they say?"

"That the singer came home shortly after eleven o'clock in company with a tall man who wore a mask. I may have shown some expression in my face at this news, for the two women began to weep, and implored me not to think ill of their young lady. They had been with her for some time, they said, and they had never seen any man enter the house after four o'clock in the afternoon. The young girl, who probably had been reading romances, said that the signora was an angel of purity."

"I would say that myself," said the councilor, busily counting the window panes in the Palace, which they were approaching. "I would say that myself. One can find

nothing to say against Signora Bianetti. She is a good, pious child. Is it her fault that she is beautiful, and that she must support herself by her singing?"

"You can believe me," replied Lange, "a physician can see deeply in these matters. One look at the pure features of the unhappy girl convinced me of her innocence far more than did the vows of her handmaiden. The latter, probably from curiosity as to this strange midnight visit, had remained near the door. She heard excited words pass between her mistress and the stranger, who had a deep, hollow voice. They spoke in French. The signora finally began to weep bitterly, and the man cursed horribly. Suddenly she heard a sharp scream in her mistress's voice. Alarmed at this, she opened the door, and the man in the mask rushed hastily past her and through the hall to the stairs. The maid followed him for a few steps, and heard a great noise at the bottom of the staircase—a noise as if he had fallen. She heard him groaning and moaning, but she was too terrified to go a step farther in that direction. She ran back into the room—there lay the lady covered with blood, her eyes closed as if she were dead. The girl was so alarmed that she did not know what to do at first. She awoke the old woman, told her to do what she could for their mistress, while she herself ran to fetch me——"

"And Signora Bianetti herself has said nothing? Did you not question her?"

"I went to the police station at once and awoke the commissioner. He ordered a search of all the taverns and of all dark corners of the city where criminals are wont to hide. No one had passed the gates in that last hour, and orders went out that anyone who passed after that should be examined. The owners of the little house, who lived in the upper story, did not even know of the affair until the police came to search their dwelling. It is quite incredible that the murderer could have escaped, for he must have injured himself severely in his fall down the stairs. The lower steps were stained with blood. It is likely that he wounded himself with his own dagger. It is still more

impossible to understand how he could have escaped, as the house door was closed. Signora Bianetti became conscious at ten o'clock this morning, and when examined by the chief of police, declared that she had no idea who the man in the mask could be. All physicians and surgeons are compelled, as you perhaps know, to report any such wounds at once to the authorities, to aid in the capture of the murderer. This is the affair as it stands now. But I am convinced that there is some deep secret here which the singer will not reveal. Signora Bianetti is not the sort of woman who would allow a strange man to accompany her home at that hour. Her handmaiden, who was present at the examination, seems to suspect something of the kind. For, when she saw that the signora did not intend to say anything, she herself said nothing about the quarrel she had heard, and threw me a look which seemed to implore me to be silent also. 'This is a terrible affair,' she said as she led me out to the stairway again, 'but nobody in the world can make me betray what my signora does not wish to have known.' Then she confessed something else to me, something which may throw light on this sad affair."

"Well—and may I not know what this something else is?" asked the councilor. "You see how curious I am. Do not keep me in suspense, if you do not wish me to have one of my attacks."

"Tell me, Bolnau, do you know whether there is anyone else of your name in this city? Or do you know of anyone of that name anywhere else in the world? And if you do, where is he and who is he?"

"I know of no one else in this town," answered Bolnau. "When I moved here about eight years ago, I was pleased to think that my name was not Meier, or Müller, or anything else that one finds by the dozen, causing great trouble and inconvenience. In Cassel I was the only man in my family. And I know of no other Bolnau in the whole world except my son, that unhappy music-mad fool. He has gone to America, I believe, and has disappeared altogether. But why do you ask this question, doctor?"

"Well, it can't be meant for you, councilor, and your son is in America; but it is already a quarter past twelve o'clock! Princess Sophie is ill, and here I stand chatting with you. Farewell and *au revoir*!"

"You don't move one step," cried Bolnau, holding the doctor's arm, "until you tell me what it was the girl said."

"I will, but you must not reveal it to a soul. The singer's last word, breathed just as she sank down unconscious, was—*Bolnau.*"

III

No one had ever seen Councilor Bolnau in so serious and gloomy a mood as he was after he had parted from Dr. Lange in front of the Palace. He was usually so cheery and bright when he made his morning promenade, and had such an amiable smile for all the ladies he met, such merry jokes for his men friends, that no one would have taken him to be sixty years old. He had, indeed, all possible cause for cheeriness. He had made a neat fortune for himself, had won the title of Councilor of Commerce, and then had retired to enjoy life in his pretty home in B. in company with a wife who was as fond of all good things as he was himself. He had one son, whom he had intended to make his successor in business. But the boy had but one interest, his love for music. All business, trading and commerce was hateful to him. The father had a hard, stubborn head; the son also. The father was apt to be violent and exaggerated in excitement; the son also.

When the son had just passed twenty, the father was fifty years old, and ready to retire and to leave his business to his son. But one fine summer evening the son disappeared, taking nothing with him but a few piano scores of his favorite operas. From England he wrote his father a friendly letter, saying that he was going to America. The councilor wished him good luck for his journey, and then moved his household to B.

The thought of this music-mad fool, as he dubbed his

son, rendered many an hour gloomy for him. He had told the boy never to show himself before him again; hence, he knew that he need never expect to see his son unless he sent for him. It seemed to him at times that he had been foolish to insist on putting the boy into trade. But years passed, and a busy life of pleasure gave him little time for sad thoughts. His days were spent in seeking for amusement, and if one wanted to behold him at his merriest, one could do it easily between eleven and twelve o'clock in Broad Street. There one could see a tall, thin man in modishly cut garments with a lorgnette and a riding whip, whose quick movements contrasted amusingly with his gray hairs. He bowed incessantly to the right and to the left, stopping every two paces to talk to some one and to laugh merrily. If one were a stranger and saw such a man at the hour named, one could be certain that it was Councilor Bolnau.

But to-day all was different. If the news of the sad accident to the singer had excited him, the doctor's last words threw him into a fright that almost lamed him. "Her last word before she became unconscious was *Bolnau*! She had spoken his honest name under such suspicious circumstances?" His knees trembled, his head drooped. "Bolnau!" he thought—"Bolnau, royal Councilor of Commerce! Suppose the singer were to die, and the maid-servant were to tell her secret! The police authorities would then know all about the murder, and all about this terrible last word. What could not a clever, ambitious lawyer make of this single word, some young man who was anxious to make a name by a *cause célèbre*?" The councilor put up his lorgnette and stared in despair at the prison, the gables of which he could just see in the distance. "That would be your goal, Bolnau. Perhaps they would make it a short term only, because of many years of faithful service to your country!"

He breathed heavily and loosened his cravat, then dropped his hand with a start of terror. Was not that the spot the rope encircled?—that the cold steel cut through?

If he met an acquaintance who bowed to him, he said to himself: "He knows about it already, and wants to show me that he understands." If another friend passed hastily without seeing him, then he was sure that this person knew also all about it and did not wish any further acquaintance with a murderer. A little more, and he would soon come to believe that he himself had really committed the murder. It was no wonder that he made a wide curve to avoid the police station. Might not the commissioner be standing at the window, see him, and call down to him, "Come up here a moment, I have a word to say to you"? He already felt a guilty trembling in all his limbs; he was already conscious of a desire to control all possible emotion in his face. Was it not he whom the unfortunate singer had accused with her last word?

Then he suddenly remembered that all this emotion was exceedingly bad for his health. He looked eagerly about for window panes to count, but the houses danced before his eyes, and the church steeple seemed to drop him a mocking courtesy. A terror of alarm seized him; he ran hastily through the streets until he sank down breathless in his own armchair. His first question, when he had come to himself again, was whether anyone from the police station had come to ask for him.

IV

When Dr. Lange came to see his patient that evening, he found her much better than he had hoped. He sat down beside her bed and began to talk with her about the unfortunate affair. She was resting one elbow on her pillows, while her delicate hand supported her beautiful head. Her face was still very pale; her great exhaustion seemed to give her but one charm the more, and her dark eyes had lost nothing of their expressiveness, nothing of the fire which had attracted the doctor, even though he was no longer in those years where imagination heightens beauty.

He said to himself that he had seldom seen so sweet a face. Her features were not regular, but there was a harmony, a charm about them for which he could not find the reason at first. But his eyes, experienced in reading the soul, soon saw that it was the nobility, the purity of her spirit, which shed such a radiance over her virginal beauty. "You seem to be studying my features, doctor," said the singer, smiling. "You sit there so quiet looking at me, and you seem to forget what I have just asked you. Or perhaps you do not wish to give the answer. May I not know what people say about my misfortune?"

"Why should you wish to hear all the foolish gossip started by idle tongues? I was just thinking how pure your soul shines out from your eyes. You have found peace within yourself; what, therefore, do you care for the opinions of others?"

"You are evading me," she answered. "You wish to avoid giving me an answer by paying me compliments. Why should I not care for the opinion of others? What honest girl may dare to ignore the society in which she lives—may dare to say that it is of no importance to her what people say about her? Or do you believe, perhaps," she continued more gravely, "that I do not care about the gossip because I belong to a profession in which the world has little confidence? Confess that you take me to be as careless as some of the others!"

"Most assuredly not. I have never heard anything but good said about you, Signora Bianetti. What else would there be but good to say of your quiet, retired life, and of your calm reserve when you do go out into the world? But why do you insist upon knowing what they say now? As your physician, I may not think that it is yet time to tell you."

"Oh, please, doctor—please do not torture me like this," she cried. "I can read in your eyes that it is no good thing they say of me now. Do you not think that this uncertainty is far worse for me than the truth could be?"

The doctor saw the truth of this last remark, and he

feared also that during his absence some gossiping woman might intrude upon his patient and tell her worse things than he would say.

"You know the people here," he began. "B. is quite a city, but when an event of this kind happens we learn how provincial we still are. It is true that everyone in the city is talking about you now, but you cannot be surprised at that. And as nothing definite is known, why then—why then, they invent all sorts of things. For instance, this masked man to whom you were seen talking at the ball, and who without doubt is the person who committed this deed, they say that he is——"

"Well, what do they say?" begged the singer in excitement. "Please tell me."

"They say that it is some former lover who knew you in some other city, and who tried to kill you because of jealousy."

"They can say that! Oh, how miserable I am!" she cried in emotion, while tears shone in her beautiful eyes. "How hard people are toward a poor unprotected girl. But tell me more, doctor, tell me more! You are keeping something from me, I know it. What other city do they say was it that——"

"Signora, I should have thought that you had more self-control!" said Lange, alarmed at the excitement of his patient. "In truth I am sorry that I have already said so much. I would not have said even this had I not feared that some one else might do so."

The singer dried her tears hastily. "I will be very quiet," she said with a sad smile. "I will be as quiet as a good child. I will try to think that all these people who are now condemning me were applauding me. And now tell me more, dear good doctor, tell me more!"

"Oh, well, these idle tongues say stupid things," continued the physician reluctantly. "It seems that the other evening, when you appeared in 'Othello,' there was a strange nobleman here visiting some one in the city. He is said to have recognized you and to have declared that

about two years ago he saw you in Paris in exceedingly bad company—but, dear me—you are so pale——"

"No, no, the lamp is growing dim; tell me more!"

"This talk went about in the higher circles only at first, but a little later it leaked out, and the general public seemed to know of it. Now that this affair has occurred, people are trying to connect the two, and they say that the crime has something to do with your former life in Paris."

The expressive features of the sick girl had changed from deepest pallor to flaming red during the last sentences. She had raised herself up in bed as if she would not lose a word of it, her eyes rested hotly upon the mouth of her physician, she scarcely seemed to breathe. "Ah, now it is all over!" she cried, while tears burst from her eyes. "If *he* should hear this, it would be too much for his jealous nature. Why did I not die yesterday? Then I should have been with my good father and my sweet mother—they would have comforted me, and I should not have known the scorn of these cruel people!"

The doctor was still pondering over these strange words, and was seeking some comfort to give her, when the door flew open hastily and a tall young man rushed in. His face was very handsome, but his features were darkened by an expression of wild defiance; his eyes rolled, his hair hung loose around his forehead. He had a large roll of music in one hand, with which he gesticulated violently before he could find breath to speak. The singer cried out at his entrance. The doctor thought at first that her scream was one of fear; but he saw in a moment that it was joy, for a sweet smile had parted her lips and her eyes shone through the tears.

"Carlo!" she cried. "Carlo! Are you come at last to see me?"

"Miserable woman!" cried the young man, stretching his arm, with the roll of music, majestically toward her. "Let me hear no more of your siren song. I am come—to judge you!"

"Oh, Carlo!" interrupted the singer, her voice as soft

and sweet as the tones of a flute. "How can you speak so to your Giuseppa!"

The young man was apparently preparing an answer, when the doctor, who found this scene much too exciting for his patient, intervened between them. "My dear Mr. Carlo," he said, offering him his snuff-box, "would you kindly remember that mademoiselle is in no condition to have her nerves played upon in such manner?"

The stranger turned wide eyes on him, and pointing the roll at him inquired, in a deep, threatening voice, "Who are you, earthworm, that you dare intervene between me and my anger?"

"I am Court Physician Lange," replied the latter, closing his snuff-box. "And among my several titles there is nothing about an earthworm. I am master here as long as the signora is ill, and I tell you in all kindness that I will put you out unless you modulate your *presto assai* to a respectable *larghetto*."

"Oh, do not worry him, doctor," cried the sick woman anxiously. "Do not make him angry. Carlo is my friend —he will not harm me, whatever evil tongues may have told him concerning me."

"Ha! You dare to mock me? But know, miserable creature, the lightning has burst the door of your secret, and illumined the night in which I have been walking! Was it because of this that you would not let me know where you came from? who you were? For this reason, therefore, did you close my mouth with kisses when I would ask about your past life? Fool that I am, to let myself be charmed by a woman's voice, although I knew that it is but deception and falsity. Only in the song of man is there truth and strength. *Ciel!* How could I let myself be carried away by the roulades of a worthless creature!"

"Oh, Carlo!" whispered the invalid, "if you only knew how your words wound my heart! Your suspicions strike deeper than did the murderer's steel!"

The stranger laughed a harsh laugh. "Ah, yes, indeed, my fair dove! You would wish your lovers deaf and blind,

would you not? This Parisian must have been a clever fellow to find you again so soon."

"This is too much!" cried the doctor, catching the other by the arm. "You leave this room at once or I will call up the janitor of the house to put you out with violence."

"I'm going, earthworm, I'm going!" cried the stranger, pushing the doctor gently down into an armchair. "I am going, Giuseppa, never to return again! If you die, miserable woman, hide your soul in some corner where I can never meet you! I would curse Heaven if I must share it with you!—you have robbed me so cruelly of my love, of my very life!" He gesticulated again with the roll of music, but his wildly rolling eye was dim with tears as he threw a last look at the sick girl and then rushed sobbing from the room.

"Oh, follow him, stop him!" cried the singer. "Bring him back, or I shall never be happy again!"

"No, indeed, my dear young lady," replied Dr. Lange, getting up out of his armchair. "We must have no more such scenes here. I will prescribe for you some soothing drops, which you must take every hour."

The poor girl had sunk back in her cushions and had fainted again. The doctor called a servant and they worked together to restore the patient to her senses. During this time the doctor could not resist the temptation to scold the serving maid. "Did I not tell you that nobody should be allowed to enter this room? And here you let this crazy man in, who was near being the death of your young lady!"

"I didn't let anybody in," answered the girl, sobbing. "But I couldn't refuse *him*. Signora sent me to his house three times already to-day to implore him to come to her, if only for a moment. I was to say that she was dying and that she must see him once more before her death."

"Indeed? And who is this——"

The sick woman opened her eyes. She looked first at the doctor then at her servant, then her eyes wandered uneasily about the room. "He is gone, he is gone forever," she

whispered weakly. "Oh, dear doctor, please go to Bolnau!"

"For mercy's sake, what do you want of my poor old councilor? This affair has already thrown him on a sick bed. How could he possibly help you?"

"I made a mistake," she said. "I meant you should go to my friend, the foreign orchestra leader. His name is Boloni, and he lives in the Hotel de Portugal."

"I remember having heard about him," said the doctor. "But what shall I say to him when I see him?"

"Tell him that I will explain everything if he will only come once more—but no, I could never tell him myself—would *you* tell him, doctor? I have such confidence in you—if I told you everything, you would explain it to him, would you not?"

"I am quite at your disposal, and will do everything I can to ease your mind."

"Then come back to-morrow morning. I do not feel able to talk any more to-day. And one thing more. Babette, give the doctor his handkerchief."

The servant opened a cupboard and handed the doctor a handkerchief of yellow silk which exhaled a strong but pleasant perfume.

"This is not mine," said the doctor. "I use only linen handkerchiefs. You have made a mistake in the owner."

"But that is impossible, sir," replied the girl. "We found it on the floor last night. It does not belong to any of us, and no one has been here but yourself."

The doctor's eyes met those of his patient, which were resting in anxious expectation on his face. "Could not this belong to—some one else?" he asked firmly.

"Show it to me," she replied anxiously. "I had not thought of that." She examined the cloth and found a monogram in one corner. Her cheek paled and she began to tremble.

"You seem to know that name. You perhaps know also the person who has lost this handkerchief?" continued Lange. "It might be of use to us; may I take it with me?"

Giuseppa seemed fighting with herself for a decision. Finally she said: "Take it! Even if the terrible man should come once more, and better strike my suffering heart this time—even then! Take it, doctor. To-morrow I will explain this handkerchief and other things to you."

V

It is easy to imagine how completely this affair occupied the thoughts of Dr. Lange. His extensive practice was as much of a burden to him now as it had hitherto been a delight. The many other visits he was obliged to make kept him away from the singer until quite late the following morning, in spite of his impatience to be at her bedside. But these visits were not quite an unmixed evil, for in all the different houses he could listen to what was being said about Signora Bianetta. And he hoped also to be able to learn something more about her strange lover, Boloni.

The opinions as to the singer were not very favorable. The judgment was all the harsher because the gossips were angry at not being able to hear anything definite about the matter. And what young and beautiful maiden, who is also successful as an artist, has not many enemies made by envy? The strange musician was little known in the city. He had come to B. a little less than a year ago, and lived very quietly in a small upper room in his hotel. He seemed to be making a living by giving singing lessons and composing music. All those who knew him seemed to think that he was just a little crazy. But the few who had become his friends spoke of him as being very interesting, and some of them went regularly to the Hotel de Portugal for supper, to be able to listen to his delightful conversation on musical subjects. Boloni seemed to have no relatives or no intimate friends here. People did not seem to suspect his relations with the singer Bianetti.

Councilor Bolnau was still ill in bed. He was much depressed, and spoke incessantly of things which usually did

not interest him at all. He had bought a collection of law books which he was eagerly studying. His wife said that he had read throughout the preceding night, and that she had heard him moaning. His study was particularly directed toward the subject of the unjustly accused, especially such of them as had been executed, although quite innocent. He told his friend the doctor that there was much comfort in the slowness of law proceedings in Germany, for if a suit lasted ten years or more it was safer for those who were really innocent, than in places where they arrested you one day and hanged you the next.

When the doctor finally reached the home of the singer Bianetti, he found his patient much depressed and very unhappy. Her wound appeared to be healing well, but with her growing physical health the calmness of her soul seemed to be vanishing. "I have been thinking over all these things," she said. "Is it not strange, doctor, that you should have come into my life in this peculiar way? Two days ago I scarcely knew of your existence. And now that I am so unhappy, I have found a kind, fatherly friend in you."

"Mademoiselle Bianetti," replied Lange, "the physician has more to do by the sick bed than merely to feel the pulse, to bind up wounds and to prescribe medicines. Believe me, when we sit alone by our patient, when we hear the inner pulse, the pulse of the soul, beating so uneasily, when we know that there are wounds to heal which cannot be seen—then the physician is lost in the friend, and we see anew the wonderful interrelation between body and soul."

"Yes, indeed, that is it!" said Giuseppa, taking his hand. "That is it, and my soul also has found its physician in you. You may have to do much for me; you may even have to appear in the courts in my name. If you are willing to make this great sacrifice for a poor girl who has no one else, then I will tell you everything."

"You may depend upon me for everything," said the kind old man, pressing her hand warmly.

"But think well before you promise! The world has

cast a slur upon my reputation; it has accused, judged, and condemned me. Will it not throw scorn upon you when you take the part of the maligned singer, of the friendless foreigner?"

"I am not afraid," cried the doctor ardently. "And now tell me your story."

VI

The singer began: "My father was Antonio Bianetti, a celebrated violinist, whose name you may have heard, as his travels led him through many countries. I can remember him only from my very earliest childhood, when he taught me the scales. My mother was an excellent singer, and accompanied my father on his travels, appearing with him at his concerts. I was four years old when my father died on one of his journeys, and left us in great poverty. My mother was obliged to support us by her singing. A year later she married a musician who had been very flattering in his compliments and attentions. But she soon saw that he had married her only to utilize her voice. He became musical director in a little city in Alsatia, and then our sorrows began.

"My mother had three more children and lost her voice completely. This cut off the better part of my stepfather's income, for it was my mother's singing which had been the main attraction at his concerts. He was very cruel to her after this, and even refused me proper food until he hit upon a means of making me useful. He forced me to sing many hours each day, teaching me the most difficult music, and he made of me one of those unfortunate infant prodigies to whom nature has given a beautiful talent to their own misfortune. My mother could not endure the sight of my suffering. She seemed to be fading away, and we found her dead in bed one morning. What shall I tell you of the years that followed, years of martyrdom for me? I was but eleven years old, and had to attend to the housekeeping,

to educate the smaller children, and to learn the songs for my concerts. It was indeed a time of torture!

"During these years a strange gentleman would come to visit us occasionally, bringing with him a bag full of money for my father. Even now I shiver when I think of him. He was a tall gaunt man of about middle age. The piercing glance of his small gray eyes cannot be forgotten by anyone who has seen him. He seemed to be particularly fond of me. He praised my size, my face, my figure, and my singing. In spite of my protests he would take me on his knee and kiss me, with the words: 'Two or three years more, and you will be ready, little one!' and then he and my stepfather would burst into a wild, coarse laugh. On my fifteenth birthday my stepfather said to me: 'Listen, Giuseppa! You have nothing, you are nothing, and you need expect nothing from me. I have enough to do to care for my own three. Little Christel can now take your place as infant prodigy. All you have—your singing—you have me to thank for, and that must help you to get along in the world. But your uncle in Paris has promised to take you into his house.' 'My uncle in Paris?' I cried in astonishment, for I had never heard of any such person. 'Yes, your uncle in Paris. He may be here any day.'

"You can perhaps imagine how delighted I was at this. It is now three years ago, but I can still remember the happiness of those hours as clearly as if it were but yesterday. It was almost too much happiness to think of the chance of escape from my stepfather's house, to think of an uncle kind enough to take pity on me, and also to think of going to Paris, which had always seemed to me the home of brightness and pleasure. Finally, one evening, a carriage stopped at our door. 'That is your uncle,' said my father. I ran downstairs, threw open the door—what a terrible disappointment awaited me! It was the man with the bags of money.

"I was almost unconscious from fright and disappointment, but I cannot forget the ghastly joy that shone out of his gray eyes when he saw how tall I had grown. I

can still hear his hoarse voice in my ears: 'Ah. now you are ready, my dear! Now I can introduce you into the great world.' He took me by the hand, and threw the bag which he carried on the table. A shower of gold and silver pieces rolled out of it, and my father cried aloud with joy, while the smaller children crawled about picking up the money that had fallen to the floor. It was the price of my body and soul!

"The following day we set out for Paris. The gaunt man (I could not bring myself to call him uncle) talked to me incessantly of the brilliant part I should play in his *salons*. I could not feel any pleasure in it; a strange fear had taken the place of all my joy and happiness. We reached Paris at last, and our carriage stopped before a large brilliantly lighted house. Ten or twelve very pretty girls danced down the broad staircase to meet us. They embraced and kissed me, and called me their sister Giuseppa. I asked the man, 'Are these all your daughters, sir?' 'Yes, they are all my good children,' he answered, laughing, and the girls and the many servants standing about also laughed loudly.

"The magnificent apartments and the beautiful garments that were given me distracted my troubled mind a little. The following evening I was most beautifully dressed and led into the drawing-room. The twelve girls, also magnificently attired, sat about at card tables and on sofas. They were carrying on a lively conversation with a number of gentlemen of varying ages. When I appeared they all stopped talking and looked at me. The owner of the house led me to the piano and told me to sing. When I had finished they all applauded enthusiastically. Some of them began to talk to me, and appeared much entertained by my awkward French, which was half Italian. They paid me many compliments, and I blush now to think of some of the words they said. My life went on thus for several days very pleasantly. No one troubled me, I could do as I chose, I had everything I wished for, and I might have been quite content had I not felt that strange fear of

this house and of these people. I would try to explain it by my own ignorance, saying to myself that this was the great world, and that I should learn to grow accustomed to its ways.

"And now, dear doctor, look at this insignificant little bit of paper. To it I owe my rescue. I found it one morning on my breakfast tray, hidden beneath a roll. I do not know what kind hand laid it there, but may heaven forever bless the writer of it, who had taken pity on me before it was too late! In the letter were the words:

"'MADEMOISELLE

"'This house in which you live has the worst possible reputation. The women who surround you are unfit companions for any good girl. Should we have been mistaken in believing Giuseppa innocent of this knowledge? Is she willing to purchase a short time of pleasure with many years of repentance?'

"It was terrible news, for it suddenly, almost too suddenly, tore aside the happy veil of childish innocence that had rested over my soul—and it destroyed all my hopes for the future. What was I to do? I was still too young to have learned to make important decisions for myself. The man to whom this house belonged appeared to me like an evil magician who was able to read all my thoughts, who might indeed already know that I had learned the truth. And yet I would rather have died than stay a moment longer in that house. I had heard a girl in the house opposite ours speaking Italian now and then. I did not know her—but did I know anyone else in this great city? The sounds of my own language awoke confidence in me! I would flee to her and on my knees I would implore her to save me.

"It was but seven o'clock in the morning. Following the habits of my childhood I was accustomed to rise early, and it was this that saved me. At such an hour everyone in the house, even to the majority of the servants, was still asleep. Only the concièrge might possibly see me, but

he was not likely to imagine that anyone could wish to escape. I dared the attempt. Throwing a plain dark cloak about me, I hurried down the stairs and slipped past the man at the door without his noticing me. Three steps more and I was free.

"Across the street to the right lived the Italian girl. I sprang across the roadway and knocked at the door. When the servant opened it I asked for the signora with the dark curls, who could speak Italian. The man laughed and said I probably meant her excellency, the young Countess Seraphina. 'Yes, yes,' I exclaimed, 'please lead me to her quickly!' He seemed to hesitate at first for it was still so early, but my entreaties won him over. He led me up to a room in the second story, told me to wait there and called a serving maid whom he told to announce me to her excellency. I had thought that the pretty Italian girl was some one of my own class in life; I felt almost ashamed to have to tell my story to a young lady of such position. But I had no time for hesitation; the maid returned in a moment to lead me to the bed of her young mistress. It was indeed the beautiful young lady whom I had heard speaking Italian. I fell on my knees before her and implored her protection. When she had heard my story she was much moved, and promised to save me. She sent for the man who had let me into the house, and commanded him to say nothing to anyone about my being there. She told them to give me a little room, the windows of which opened on to the court. She had my food sent to me there, gave me some sewing to occupy my mind, and I lived there for several days, full of joy over my rescue mingled with anxiety for my future.

"The house to which I had fled was the home of the ambassador of a small German court. Her excellency was his niece, a young Italian countess, who was completing her education in Paris. She was a most kind and amiable creature, whose benevolence to me I shall never forget. She came to see me every day and tried to comfort me. She told me that her uncle had sent his servants on a

secret investigation of the house opposite. The occupants of it were in great alarm at my disappearance, but they were anxious that no word of it should be spread abroad. The servants whispered among themselves that one of the young ladies had thrown herself from a window of the second story into the canal. It happened that my room had been on a corner, one window looking out upon the street, the other down on to the canal which flowed past the house. I remember to have opened the window on that side the morning of my escape; it had probably remained open, and in this way my disappearance was apparently explained. Signora Seraphina was just about to return to Italy, and she was kind enough to take me with her. She did even more than this: she persuaded her parents to take me into their home in Piacenza. She engaged masters to perfect my talent. I have to thank her for my art, for my freedom, for my life itself, perhaps.

"It was in Piacenza that I became acquainted with the musical director, Carlo Boloni. In spite of his name, however, he is not an Italian. He seemed to love me, but he did not declare himself to me there. Soon after making his acquaintance I accepted the engagement at this theater. People have been kind to me here; the public has seemed to admire me. My manner of life and my reputation have been unspotted by any calumny. In all these months no man has ever visited me except—I can confess our beautiful relations to you without a blush—except Boloni, who soon followed me here. Now you have heard my story. Tell me candidly, do you think that I have done anything to deserve such bitter punishment? How have I sinned that this terrible thing should happen to me?"

When the singer had finished talking, the physician took her hand and pressed it warmly. "I am very happy," he said, "to join the little company of those who have been good to you. It is not much that I can do, it is out of my power to help you to the extent that the kind young countess has done, but I will try to do what can be done

to clear up the matter here; and I will also endeavor to bring about a reconciliation with your hot-tempered friend. But tell me, what nationality is this Signor Boloni?"

"Now you are asking me too much," she answered evasively. "All I know is that he is of German birth, and I have understood that he left his home because of a family quarrel. He has been in England and in Italy, and has been here less than a year."

"But why haven't you told him the story you have told me just now?"

Giuseppa blushed at the question. She looked down as she answered: "You are my physician, my fatherly friend. When I speak to you I feel as a child might feel when confiding in its father. But how could I speak to a young man about such things? I know his jealous temperament, his easily excited nature. I would never dare to tell him of this terrible snare that I have escaped."

"I honor and admire your feelings, my dear child. Believe me, it does an old man good to find such delicacy of scruple in these days, when it seems to be considered good form to forget all scruple. But you have not told me all. That evening at the ball, that terrible night?"

"It is true, I have still more to tell you. Whenever I thought back over my rescue, I would send up silent thanks to Heaven that my good fortune had led me to such kind people. And also did I praise Heaven that, in that terrible house from which I had escaped, they believed me to be dead. For I knew that if that dreadful man had any suspicion that I was still alive, he would come to drag back his victim, or to kill her. For he had doubtless given my father much money for me. Therefore, as long as I was in Piacenza I would not accept any of the many favorable offers I received to make a public appearance. But one day, when I had been there about a year and a half, Countess Seraphina showed me a Paris newspaper in which I read the announcement of the death of the Chevalier de Planto."

"Chevalier de Planto?" interrupted the physician.

"Was that the name of the man who took you from your stepfather's house?"

"Yes, that was what he was called. This news from Paris made me very happy and took away the last obstacle to a public appearance, and to the possibility of my no longer being a burden to my benefactors. A few weeks later I came here to B. Two days ago, as you know, I went to the ball, and I will confess to you that I was in a very happy mood. I had not told Boloni what costume I was to wear. I wished to tease him and then surprise him. But suddenly, as I chanced to be standing alone, a voice whispered in my ear, 'Seppa, how is your uncle?' It was like a clap of thunder. I had not heard that name since the day I had escaped from that terrible man. 'My uncle?' I had no uncle, and there was but one who had passed for my uncle in the eyes of the world, the Chevalier de Planto. I could scarcely control myself sufficiently to reply, 'You must be mistaken.' I attempted to hurry away and hide myself in the crowd, but the stranger pushed his arm through mine and held me fast. 'Seppa,' he whispered, 'I warn you that you had better walk quietly along with me, or else I will tell all these good people of the company you once kept.' I was crushed, everything looked black before my eyes—I seemed to have but one thought, a terrible fear of shame. What could a poor helpless girl do, when this stranger, whoever he might be, could tell the world such things of me? It would have been only too readily believed, and Carlo, alas! would not have been the last to accept it as true and to condemn me. Helplessly I followed the man at my side. He whispered dreadful things to me. He told me that I had rendered my uncle, my stepfather, most unhappy, that I had ruined my entire family. When I could endure it no longer I tore myself away and called for my carriage. But as I looked back once more on the staircase the dreadful stranger was behind me. 'I will drive home with you, Seppa,' he said with a hoarse laugh. 'I have a few words more to say to you.' I must have fainted, for I remember nothing very

clearly until the carriage stopped before this house. I entered my room; he followed me and began to talk to me at once. In deadly terror that he would betray me, I told Babette to leave the room. 'What do you want of me, wretch?' I cried in anger. 'What evil can you say of me? It was without my own consent that I entered that house, and I left it as soon as I saw what I had to expect there.'

"'Do not make a scene, Seppa. There are but two ways to save yourself. Either you pay me ten thousand francs at once, in jewels or in gold, or you follow me to Paris. You must do one of these things, or the whole city will know more about you than you would like.' I was beside myself with rage and horror. 'Who gives you the right to make such demands of me?' I cried. 'Tell them if you must, but leave my house this instant or I will call the neighbors!'

"I made several steps toward the window, but he followed me and caught my arm. 'Who gives me the right?' he repeated. 'Your father, my dear, your father.' A horrible laugh burst from his lips, the light of the candles fell upon a pair of piercing gray eyes, and I knew who it was that I saw before me. I knew that his death had been only a pretense, a lie spread abroad for some evil purpose. Despair gave me strength. I tore myself from his hold and endeavored to snatch off his mask. 'I know you, Chevalier de Planto!' I cried, 'and you must answer before the Court of Justice for your treatment of me!' 'Not too fast, my darling,' he said, and as he spoke I felt the steel in my heart—I believed myself dying."

The doctor shivered. It was a bright day, and yet he felt the shudder one experiences when speaking of ghosts in the dark. It seemed to him that he could hear the hoarse laugh of this Satan, that he could see the monster's piercing gray eyes behind the curtains of the bed. "Then you believe," he said after a few moments, "that the chevalier is not dead, and that it is he who attempted to murder you?"

"His voice, his eyes, tell me that it was he. The handkerchief I gave you yesterday makes it quite certain. It had his initials in the corner."

"And will you give me authority to act for you? May I tell in court what you have told me now?"

"I have no other choice; you may tell everything. But first, dear doctor, please go to Boloni and tell him what I have told you. He will believe you; he knows Countess Seraphina also."

"And may I not also know," continued the physician, "the name of the ambassador in whose house you were hidden?"

"Why not? it was Baron Martinow."

"Baron Martinow?" cried Lange in pleasant excitement. "He who was in the diplomatic service of Prince X——?"

"You know him? He was the ambassador of the prince's court in Paris, and later in St. Petersburg."

"Oh, that is very good, very good!" said the physician, rubbing his hands joyfully. "I know him, and he is in this very town, having arrived yesterday. He sent for me this morning; he has taken rooms in the Hotel de Portugal."

A tear shone in the singer's eyes, and she appeared much moved. "What a happy chance!" she exclaimed. "I had imagined him many hundred miles away, and now he is here; and he can bear witness to the truth of my story. Oh, hurry to him—and oh! if Carlo could only be with you when he assures you that I have told the truth!"

"He shall be with me. I will drag him there, depend upon me. And now, my dear child, farewell for to-day. You may be quite calm, fate will be kind to you once more, I know. And be sure that you take the medicine I left for you, two spoonfuls every hour."

The doctor left the room, looking back to receive another grateful glance from his patient. She seemed calm and happy. It was as if the narration of her story had

lifted a heavy weight from her soul. She looked with confidence to the future, for a more fortunate fate seemed dawning for her.

VII

Baron Martinow, for whom Dr. Lange had done an important service some years before, welcomed him gladly and told him all he wished to know about the singer Bianetti. The baron not only corroborated the truth of her story, but he was enthusiastic in his praise of her character. He promised to talk about her in this way to everyone whom he should meet in the city, and to refute the rumors that were in circulation. He kept his promise, and his high position, and his open praise of the Italian singer caused a complete reversion of opinion in her favor within a few days. But Dr. Lange, when he had finished his visit to the ambassador, mounted a few stories higher in the hotel to No. 54, the room where the musician lived. He stood before the door for an instant to get his breath, for the steep stairs had fatigued him. Then he listened, for he heard strange sounds behind the door. There seemed to be some one seriously ill within the room; he heard sighs and deep groans, mingled with dreadful French and Italian curses, and now and then a hoarse, despairing laugh. The physician shuddered. He remembered that the musician's excitability of the day before had seemed to him almost like insanity. Could he have gone altogether mad through sorrow? Dr. Lange's hand was already raised to knock at the door when he noticed that it was No. 53, and he recognized with relief that he had made a mistake. When he stopped before No. 54, he heard sounds of a different character. A man's voice, rich and sweet, was singing to the accompaniment of a piano. The doctor entered and found the young man he had seen in the singer's house the day before.

Guitars, violins, loose strings, and sheets of music lay scattered about the room. In the midst of it all stood the

musician in a loose black dressing-gown, a red cap on his head, and a roll of music in his hands. Dr. Lange said later that all he could think of was Marius amid the ruins of Carthage.

The young man seemed to remember him, and his welcome was a gloomy one. But he was polite enough to push a pile of music from a chair, which he then offered to his visitor. He himself walked about the room with long steps, the flying tails of his dressing-gown taking the dust neatly off the tables and books.

He did not give the visitor time to say a word, but began at once: "You come from her? Aren't you ashamed, with your gray hairs, to be the messenger of a woman like that? I will hear nothing more of her. I have buried my happiness, I am mourning for my dead love. You see I am wearing my black dressing-gown. If you have any understanding of the workings of the soul, this should prove to you that that woman is dead for me. Oh, Giuseppa!"

"Honored sir," interrupted the doctor, "if you will but hear me——"

"Hear? What do you know about hearing? Let me try your ear, old man! Listen now, this is Woman," he continued, throwing open the top of the piano and playing something which seemed to the physician, who had no great knowledge of music, to be very much like other tunes he had heard. "Do you hear how soft this is, how melting, how clinging? But do you not notice also in these intervals the unreliable, fickle character of these creatures? But now listen—" He raised his voice and his eyes shone as he threw back the wide sleeves of his mourning garment—"Where men are gathered, there is power and truth! Here there is nothing impure, here are truly noble and beautiful tones!" He pounded about on the keys with great energy, but it seemed to the doctor that this also was like most other music he had heard.

"You have rather a peculiar manner of characterizing people," said the doctor. "As we are in the business, might

I ask you to show me what a court physician would sound like on a piano?"

The musician looked at him with scorn. "How dare you, earthworm, interrupt my brilliant and magnificent harmonies with your squeaky C sharp?"

The physician's answer was interrupted by a knocking at the door. A crooked little man entered, bowed deeply and said: "The sick gentleman in No. 53 begs the honored director not to make so much noise, for he is very weak and probably very near his passing away from this earth."

"I send my most obedient respects to the gentleman," replied the young man. "As far as I am concerned he may pass away from this earth as soon as he chooses. He keeps me awake all night with his moaning and his groaning, and he makes me shiver with his godless curses and his horrible laugh. Does this Frenchman imagine that he owns the hotel? If I disturb him, so he disturbs me also."

"But your honor will forgive me," said the little man. "He'll not last much longer, you wouldn't disturb his last moments——"

"Is the gentleman so ill?" asked the physician in sympathy. "What is the matter with him? Who is taking care of him? And who is he?"

"I do not know who he is, for I am hired to care for him in the hotel by the day. I think he calls himself Lorier, and comes from France. He was all right day before yesterday, only a little melancholy. He did not go out at all, and did not seem to want to see the sights of the city. But then I found him very ill in bed one morning, and he said that he had had an apoplectic stroke during the night. But he won't let me bring him a physician, and he curses me when I say I will fetch one. He takes care of himself, and bandages himself. I think he has some old wound from the war, which has opened again."

Just then they heard the hoarse voice of the sick man next door calling amid curses. The little lackey crossed himself and hurried away.

The doctor began again at his task of bringing the stubborn lover to reason, and this time with more success. The musician had taken up an opera score, and was gently humming portions of it. The physician took advantage of this quieter mood, and began to tell the story the singer had told him yesterday. His host did not seem to pay any attention to him at first. He read his score as absorbedly as if he were alone in his room. But gradually he began to take notice, and now and then stopped singing. He would then raise his eye from his book and glance at his visitor. Finally, he dropped the score altogether and gazed at the speaker. His eyes shone, he moved nearer, and snatched at the arm of the doctor. When the latter had finished his narrative, the young musician sprang up and ran excitedly about the room. "Yes," he exclaimed, "it sounds like truth; there is a gleam of truth in it—it may possibly be as you say. But, by Satan! might it not also be all a lie?"

"Why such sudden *decrescendo*, honored artist? Why jump from truth to lies at one leap? And if I bring you a witness for the truth—what then, my maestro?"

Boloni stood before him looking down at him. "Ah, if you could do this! I would frame you in gold! This thought alone demands a royal reward. Ah! if we could find a witness—but it is all so black around me—a tangled labyrinth—no escape—no guiding star——"

"Most honored friend," interrupted the doctor, "that sounds to me very much like some lines from Schiller's 'Robbers.' But in spite of it I do know such a witness, such a guiding star."

"Ah! bring him to me!" cried the other. "He shall be my friend, my angel, my God—I will worship him!"

"Now you are leaving out something. I seem to remember some words about a burning sword there. But I can convince you of my good will. The ambassador who received poor Giuseppa into his house happens by a lucky chance to be in this hotel occupying the first-floor suite. If you will condescend to put on a coat and a cravat, I will

lead you to him. He has promised to give you all the assurance you need."

The young man pressed the doctor's hand warmly. But even then he could not resist a certain theatrical pathos. "You are my good angel," he said with much expression. "I owe you inexpressible thanks! I will slip into my coat and follow you at once to the ambassador's rooms."

VIII

The reconciliation with her lover seemed to have a more beneficial effect upon the singer than did her medicines. She recovered quickly in the next few days, and was soon well enough to leave her bed, and to receive her sympathizing friends in her boudoir.

The chief of police had been waiting for this improvement in her condition to take up the case officially. He was a cautious and capable man, and rumor said that it was not easy for the criminal to escape upon whom his eye had once fallen. Dr. Lange had told him the singer's history, and he had received still further information from Baron Martinow. The ambassador told him that he had caused the authorities to investigate the life and the business dealings of the Chevalier de Planto. He had not neglected to emphasize the fact that the poor child had been actually sold. Shortly after Giuseppa had left Paris the house from which she had fled had been closed by the police, and the baron attributed this action to the information he had given. He also had heard of the chevalier's death, but believed, as did the police chief, that it was only a blind by means of which he might the more easily continue his nefarious business. For both men had no doubt that it was this man who had attempted to murder the singer. But it would be very difficult to follow the trace of this murderer. All the strangers who had been in B. at the time were quite above suspicion. However, they had the handkerchief which had been found in Signora Bianetti's room, and the descrip-

tion of it had been given to all seamstresses and all laundresses who had the care of the garments of strangers in the city. And the chief of police believed that it was very likely the murderer would make a second attempt upon the life of his victim, and that he was probably hiding somewhere in the vicinity.

As soon as the patient had begun to recover, the chief of police visited her in company with Dr. Lange. The three discussed the steps to be taken, but none seemed to them quite hopeful of results. Giuseppa herself finally made a suggestion which pleased both men very much. "My dear doctor," she said, "has permitted me to go out next week. If he does not think it will harm me, I might attend the last ball of the carnival as my first appearance in public again. It would interest me to show myself for the first time in the place where my misfortunes began. We will take care that it is known throughout the city that I am to attend the ball. If the chevalier is still here, I am firmly convinced that he will attempt to approach me in some disguise. He will be careful not to speak to me, or to betray himself in any way. But I know that he will not give over his attempt upon my life, and I would know him among a thousand. His height, his figure, and, above all, his eyes, would make him known to me. What do you think of this, gentlemen?"

"The plan is not a bad one," said the chief of police. "I am willing to wager that when he hears you are to be at the ball, he will appear there himself, if only to see you again and to give his anger fresh nourishment. I would recommend that you do not wear a mask. That will enable him to recognize you the more quickly, and the sooner to fall into our trap. I will dress a couple of my strongest men in dominos, and they shall remain near you the entire evening. At a sign from you they will arrest the old fox."

Babette, the signora's maid, had been in the room during this conversation. When she heard that her lady was making plans to discover the murderer or his accomplices, she believed it to be her duty to help as much as she could.

She waited for the chief of police as he was leaving the house, and told him that she had confided a circumstance to Dr. Lange, to which he did not seem to attach much importance, although it seemed worthy of notice to her.

"Nothing is unimportant for the police," answered the director. "If you know anything, tell me what it is."

"I believe my signora is too discreet, and would not tell it herself. But when she had been stabbed and fainted in my arms, her last sigh was—Bolnau."

"What?" exclaimed the chief of police angrily. "And they have not told me of this yet? This is very important. Are you sure you heard aright?—Bolnau?"

"On my honor!" replied the girl, laying her hands on her heart. "Bolnau was the name she said, and with such an expression of grief that I believe it must be the name of the murderer. But please, sir, do not betray me!"

The chief of police believed on principle that no man, however respectable he might be, was too good to commit a crime. Councilor Bolnau (he knew of no one else of this name in the city) was known to him as a man of absolute probity and of well-regulated life. But were there not instances of people of just this character discovered later to be secret criminals? Might not this man be in league with the notorious Chevalier de Planto? In such musings he continued on his way, and as he neared Broad Street it suddenly occurred to him that this was the hour when the councilor was wont to take his morning promenade. The chief decided it was a very good chance to look into the matter a little. As he turned the corner he saw the councilor coming down the street, bowing to the right and to the left, stopping to chat and laugh every few steps, a picture of cheerfulness and good nature. He might have been about fifty steps from the head of police when he caught sight of him, grew pale, and turned as if about to go down a side street. "Suspicious, most suspicious!" thought the chief, calling out the other's name as if he had just seen him. The councilor was the picture of misery. He tried to smile and to utter a jovial "*Bonjour*," but his

eyes rolled uneasily, his knees trembled and his teeth chattered.

"Well, well, what a stranger you are! I haven't seen you pass my window for several days. Aren't you well? You are so pale." The chief spoke cheerfully, but he glanced sharply at the other's face.

"Oh, no, it was just a little chill—I haven't been quite well for several days, but I think that I am all right now."

"Indeed! You have not been well?" continued the head of police. "I should not have thought it! I seem to remember to have seen you at the last ball in excellent spirits."

"Yes, indeed! But the very following day I had to go to bed with one of my attacks. But I am quite well again now."

"Well, in that case you will be certain to attend the coming ball. It is to be the last of the season, and they say it will be unusually brilliant. I hope to meet you there, councilor; and until then, adieu!"

IX

"I WILL not fail to be there!" called out the councilor with a very depressed expression. "He suspects me!" he thought to himself. "He has heard of that last word before she fainted. They say she is almost well again; but what does that matter to the police authorities when they once suspect you? Could he have been spying upon me? Perhaps they are following me and reporting to him everything that I say or do? Merciful Heaven! to think that *I* should ever have come to be a dangerous individual!"

Thus reasoned the unfortunate Bolnau, his fear increasing as he thought over the suspicious question about the next ball. "He thinks probably that I would not dare to approach the young lady because of a guilty conscience. But I will go! I will not let him nourish this suspicion. But suppose I really should tremble and become excited

when I see her? He would then believe that it was the pangs of remorse!" He tortured himself with these questionings for days, trying in vain to nerve himself to face the danger. He ordered a handsome Oriental costume, the dress of the Pasha of Janina. He put it on every day, and standing in front of a large mirror, he endeavored to school his features until he should look as if he were quite at home in this new garb. He made a lay figure out of his dressing-gown and sat it on the sofa; this was to represent Signora Bianetti. He bowed politely before her and said, "I am most delighted to see that you are quite well again." On the third day he had progressed sufficiently to say his lesson without trembling. Then he attempted something still more difficult. He offered the lady a plate with bonbons and punch, taking a glass of water to practice on. At first the dishes rattled in his trembling hand, but he soon learned to hold them more steadily, and to remark quite cheerily, "My dear signora, may I not offer you some slight refreshment?" He was getting along finely. No mortal man should see him tremble! He was going to the ball, be he ever so fearful!

Dr. Lange would not yield to anyone else the pleasure of escorting his recovered patient upon her first appearance in public. He accompanied her to the ball, and seemed to feel quite proud of his position as official escort of the beautiful girl who was now an object of great interest to all the townspeople. The inhabitants of B. are a strange sort; but perhaps they are not so very different from people elsewhere, after all! In the first days of the exciting affair one could hear nothing but evil said of the singer, from the most aristocratic drawing-rooms down to the meanest beer-gardens. But when men of position had taken up the cudgels in her behalf, when leaders of society began to praise her, the tide turned in her favor, and the entire city seemed to look upon it as a cause for public rejoicing that she had recovered again. When she entered the ballroom, the entire company appeared to have been waiting to make her the queen of the occasion. They cheered and clapped

at her entrance, crowded about her, and had so much that was complimentary to say to her that there was sufficient for some portion to fall on the head of Dr. Lange, who was much praised for having so cleverly brought her out of danger.

The singer was very happy over all this attention and applause. The joy of it almost made her forget the serious reason for her appearance that evening. But the four sturdily built dominos who were constantly near her, and the doctor's questions as to whether she had not already caught sight of the chevalier's gray eyes, reminded her of the business of the evening. She herself, and Dr. Lange also, had noticed that a tall, gaunt Turk (in B. they called it the costume of Ali Baba) was apparently endeavoring to approach her and to remain at her side. Whenever the movement of the crowd separated them, he would edge his way up to her again. The singer nudged the doctor and glanced toward the pasha. The doctor followed her glance, and said, "I've been noticing him for some time," as the Turk approached with hesitating steps. The singer held her escort's arm closer. Now he was quite near. Little gray eyes peeped out from his mask, and a hollow voice said: "Honored signora, I am most delighted to see you once more in full possession of your health." The singer started, trembled, and drew back. This seemed to alarm the man, and he disappeared again in the crowd. "Was that he?" asked the doctor. "Try to be strong; you know how important it is that we should be able to discover him. Do you think this is he?"

"I am not quite certain yet," she answered. "But I seem to recognize his eyes."

Dr. Lange gave the four dominos the order to watch the pasha sharply. He himself walked on through the hall with his lady. But they had not gone very far before they noticed the Turk evidently following them at a little distance.

Dr. Lange and his companion stepped to the buffet to take some refreshments. Scarce had they halted when the

Turk was at their side. He was holding a plate with a glass of punch and some bonbons on it; his eyes glistened; the glass danced about on the shaking plate. Now he is at her side and holds the plate out to her with the words, "My dear signora, may I not offer you some slight refreshment?"

The singer looked at him in alarm, pushed back the plate, and cried: "It is he, it is he! That terrible man! He is trying to poison me!"

The Pasha of Janina stood perfectly motionless—he seemed to have given up all idea of resistance. Without a word he allowed himself to be led away by the four sturdy dominos.

At the same moment the doctor felt somebody pulling at his cloak from behind. He turned and saw the little humpbacked lackey from the Hotel de Portugal standing pale and trembling before him. "For the love of God, doctor, won't you please come with me to No. 53? The devil is just about to fetch the French gentleman."

"What nonsense is this?" asked the doctor angrily, for he was just about to follow the arrested man to the police station. "What does it matter to me if the devil fetches him?"

"But please, honored doctor," cried the little man, almost weeping, "I thought you might possibly save him. Your honor is court physician, and usually goes to the sick people in the hotels."

Dr. Lange swallowed a curse, for he saw that he would not be able to avoid this call. He motioned to Boloni, who was standing near them, put the singer in his charge, and hurried off to the hotel with the little lackey.

X

It was quiet and deserted in the great hotel. Midnight had passed, and the lamps in the halls and on the stairways burned dimly. Dr. Lange had an uncanny sensation as

he followed the little man upstairs to the solitary invalid. The lackey opened the door, the doctor entered, and almost sank to his knees in his horror. Here lay, or rather sat, in the bed the very same sort of being who had for several days been occupying his waking and sleeping thoughts. It was a tall, gaunt, elderly man with a pointed white night-cap drawn over his forehead. Under the nightcap a large, sharp nose rose out of a thin yellow-brown face. From his color one might have thought the man already dead, had not a pair of piercing gray eyes given him a look of terrifying life. His long, thin fingers were scratching at the bed covering, while he laughed incessantly, a hoarse, frightful laugh.

"Look, he is digging his own grave!" whispered the little lackey, waking the doctor out of his dazed staring at the sick man. It was just thus that he had imagined the Chevalier de Planto would look: this piercing gray eye, these repulsive features, this thin, bony figure—all just as the singer had described him. But then he controlled himself—had he not just seen the chevalier arrested? Might not another man have gray eyes? And should he be surprised if a sick man was thin and pale? The doctor laughed at himself and stepped to the bedside. But in all his long years of practice he had never felt such fear, such repulsion at any sick bed as he did here, when he took the cold, clammy hand in his.

"This stupid fellow," cried the sick man with a weak, hoarse voice, mingling French, bad Italian, and broken German together in his speech—"this stupid fellow has brought me a doctor, I do believe. You will pardon him, sir. I have never thought much of your art. The only thing that can help me are the baths of Genoa. I have told this little beast to order post-horses for me. I will set out to-night."

"He'll set out," murmured the little lackey; "he'll set out with six coal-black steeds, but it won't be to Genoa he goes. He's going to that place where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth." The doctor saw that there was very

little to do here. He recognized the symptoms of approaching death in the sick man's eyes and in his uneasiness. He contented himself, therefore, with the command to the patient to lie as quiet as possible, and promised him a soothing draught.

The sick man laughed grimly. "Lie quiet?" he answered. "When I lie still, I can't breathe. I must sit up! I must sit in my carriage! I must get away from here! Dog, have you ordered my horses, and packed my luggage?"

"Oh, dear Lord above!" groaned the little man. "Here he is thinking about his luggage. It'll be a heavy sackful of sins that he takes with him. It wouldn't be possible to tell you all the godless speeches and curses I have heard him utter."

The physician took the sick man's hand again. "Will you not trust me a little?" he said. "My art may be able to help you, after all. Your servant tells me that you have an old wound which has opened again. Will you not let me examine it?"

The sick man complied with grumblings. The physician took off a badly made bandage, and found—a stab wound near the heart! Remarkable to relate, the wound was of the same size and character, and almost exactly in the same place as the singer's wound had been.

"But this is a fresh wound, a stab!" cried the doctor, looking at the patient with distrust. "Where did you get this wound?"

"You think I stabbed myself? Or that I have been dueling? No, by all the devils! I had a dagger in my breast pocket, and I scratched myself a little in falling downstairs."

"Scratched himself a little?" thought Lange. "He will die of this wound."

He had prepared some lemonade, and held it out to the sick man. The latter seemed to feel refreshed after drinking. He lay still for a few moments; then, seeing that several drops had fallen on the coverlet, he began to curse

and demanded a handkerchief. The lackey ran to a chest, opened it and brought out a handkerchief. A sudden terrible suspicion arose in Dr. Lange's mind. The handkerchief was of the same material and color as the one which had been found in the singer's room. The little servant was about to hand the cloth to the sick man when the latter pushed it away, and cried: "To the devil with you, little beast! How often must I tell you to put eau de heliotrope on it?" The servant took out a little bottle and sprinkled some drops upon the cloth. It was the same perfume that the other handkerchief had exhaled.

Dr. Lange trembled in every limb. There was no longer any doubt this man here was the would-be murderer of the singer Bianetti—the Chevalier de Planto! It was a helpless and dying man that he saw before him, but the doctor felt as if he might at any moment spring from his bed and clutch at his throat. He could not endure to remain an instant longer in the room with this terrible man. As he took up his hat, the little lackey clutched at his coat and groaned: "Oh, your honor, don't leave me alone with him! I should die of fright if *he* were to die now and walk about like a ghost in his flannel clothes and his nightcap. For the love of God, don't leave me."

The sick man grinned alarmingly, and laughed and cursed all together. The fright of the little servant seemed to amuse him. He put one long, thin leg out of the bed and waved his claw-like hands in the air. The doctor could endure it no longer. The madness of the other seemed to pass over into his own soul. He pushed back the little lackey and rushed from the room. Even at the street door below he could still hear the murderer's horrible laugh.

. . . . .

The following morning a carriage stopped before the Hotel de Portugal. A veiled lady and two elderly gentlemen dismounted from it and entered the house. "It is a strange chance that he should have wounded himself so severely in falling downstairs that he could not flee from the city. And a still stranger chance that it was just you,

Lange, that was called to him," remarked one of the gentlemen.

"It was, indeed," said the veiled lady. "But did you not think it was also a strange chance about the handkerchiefs? One of them he left in my room, and then to think that he should have asked for another in the very moment that the doctor was with him."

"That is fate!" said the other gentleman. "It is as if it were ordained that it should happen so. But I had almost forgotten something in all this excitement. How about the pasha who was arrested? Signora must have been mistaken. Did you release him again? Who was the poor devil?"

"Quite the contrary!" said the first gentleman. "I am convinced that this man is an accomplice of the murderer. I have had my eye on him for some time. I have ordered him to be brought here. I want to confront him with the villain upstairs."

"An accomplice? Impossible!" cried the lady.

"Not at all," said the gentleman with a slight smile. "We know a good deal more than we are willing to say just yet. But here we are at No. 53. Mademoiselle, will you have the kindness to step in here to No. 54 for the time being? Signor Boloni has permitted us to use his room as long as we need it. When I am ready to question you I will send for you."

We need not tell the reader that these three persons were the singer, the doctor, and the head of police. They came to accuse the Chevalier de Planto of an attempt at murder. The chief and the physician entered No. 53. The sick man sat up in bed just as the doctor had seen him the night before. In the light of day his features seemed still more haggard, the expression of his eye still more terrible. He looked at the doctor, then at his companion, with a glance which seemed already that of a dying man. He seemed trying to find out what all this could mean, for he already had one other visitor in his room, a young attorney with red cheeks and bright eyes. The latter had taken a place

at a table, arranged a pile of white paper before him, and held a long pen ready in his hand.

"Beast, what do these gentlemen wish here?" cried the sick man in a weak voice to his little servant. "You know I do not receive visitors."

The chief of police stepped to the bed, looked firmly at the sick man, and said with emphasis, "Chevalier de Planto!"

"*Qui vive?*" cried the sick man, raising his head in military salute.

"You are the Chevalier de Planto?"

The gray eyes gleamed, he threw piercing glances about the room, laughed mockingly, and shook his head as he replied, "The chevalier is long since dead."

"And who are you? I command you to answer, in the name of the king."

The dying man laughed: "My name is Lorier. Beast, show the gentleman my passport."

"It will not be necessary. Do you recognize this handkerchief?"

"Why should I not recognize it? You have just taken it from the chair there. But why do you annoy me with these questions?"

"If you will look down at your left hand," said the chief, "you will see that you are holding your own handkerchief. This one was found in the house of a certain Giuseppa Bianetti."

The sick man threw an angry look at his visitors. He clenched his fists and gnashed his teeth, but he would not speak another word. The chief of police motioned to the doctor. The latter left the room and returned in an instant with the singer, Signor Boloni, and the Ambassador Baron Martinow.

"Baron Martinow!" the chief turned to the ambassador, "do you recognize this man for the person you knew in Paris under the name of the Chevalier de Planto?"

"I do," replied the baron. "And I am ready to repeat what I have already told the police about him."

"Giuseppa Bianetti, is this the man who took you from your stepfather's home, who brought you into his house in Paris, and whom you accuse of the attempt to murder you?"

The singer trembled as she looked on the terrible man, but before she could answer, he himself spared her all further confession. He raised himself still higher in his bed, the top of his woolen nightcap seemed to rise up of itself, his arms were so stiff that he could scarcely move them, but his fingers caught at the air like greedy claws. His voice was scarcely more than a hoarse whisper.

"Are you come to visit me, Seppa? That is nice of you. I know that you are delighted to see me looking like this. I am sorry, indeed, that I did not reach your heart, for I would gladly have spared you the pain of seeing your uncle mocked thus by these beasts!"

"What more witness do we need?" interrupted the chief. "Attorney, you will please write out a warrant of arrest for——"

"What would you do?" cried the doctor. "Don't you see his death is very near? He will not live half an hour longer. If you have any more questions to ask him, do it at once."

The chief ordered a servant to tell the gendarmes waiting downstairs that they were to bring up their captive. The sick man sank down more and more in his pillows. His eye was breaking, but rage and anger still held it fixed on the trembling girl.

"Seppa," he whispered again. "You have ruined me; it was for that that you deserved death. You have ruined your father; they sent him to prison because he had sold you for money. He employed me to kill you—I regret indeed that my hands trembled. Cursed be these hands that can no longer strike true!" The terrible curses which he continued to pour out over himself and Giuseppa were interrupted by new arrivals. Two gendarmes brought in a man in Turkish garb—the unfortunate Pasha of Janina. Under the turban was the utterly miserable face of Councilor

Bolnau! The entire company was struck dumb with astonishment at this apparition. The musician Boloni seemed particularly startled; he grew first red, then pale, and turned his head away.

"Chevalier de Planto," said the chief, "do you know this man?"

The sick man had closed his eyes. He opened them with difficulty and said, "Send him to the devil! I never saw him before."

The Turk looked at those about him with an expression of utter despair. "I knew that it would happen thus," he said with tears in his voice. "I have been afraid of this. Mademoiselle Bianetti, how could you bring an innocent man into all this misery?"

"But what is the matter with the gentleman?" asked the singer. "I do not know him at all. What has he done, sir?"

The chief answered in great solemnity: "Signora, the Court of Justice knows no partiality! You must know this gentleman; it is Councilor Bolnau. Your own servant has confessed that when you were stabbed, you called upon his name."

The pasha groaned: "Yes, indeed, my honest name at such a moment!"

The singer was much astonished. A deep flush colored her beautiful face, she caught the hand of her lover and exclaimed: "Carlo, we must speak now! Yes, sir, I did mention this name, so dear to me, but it was not that gentleman I meant—it was——"

"It was I!" exclaimed the musician, stepping forward. "My name, if my dear father there will allow me, is Carl Bolnau."

"Carl! Musician! American!" cried the Turk, seizing him in his arms. "That is the first sensible word you ever said. You have saved me in my hour of need."

"If this is the case," said the chief of police, "then you are free, and our business here is only with this Chevalier de Planto." He turned to the bed, but the physician was al-

ready standing there, holding the hand of the murderer in his own. He now laid it gravely back on to the coverlet and closed the staring eyes. "He has gone before a higher judge," he said solemnly.

They walked softly from the room, and entered the musician's apartment. The singer buried her face on her lover's breast, and her tears, the last she should ever weep over her unfortunate fate, flowed freely. The pasha walked about the group, as if struggling for some important decision. He whispered to the doctor, then approached the young couple.

"My dearest mademoiselle," he said, "I have had much to suffer on your account. As you have uttered my name at such an important moment, I must beg you to take it for your own. You scorned the refreshment I offered you yesterday. But to-day I hope you will not refuse me—when I present to you this musical son of mine, and ask you to marry him."

She did not refuse this time, but caught his hand and kissed it fervently. The young musician clasped her in his arms again, and seemed to have quite forgotten his usual tragical pathos. The councilor took the doctor's hand and said: "Would we have thought, Lange, that all this would happen the day you told me to count the windows in the Palace—when you said to me, 'Her last word was Bolnau'?"

"Well, and what more do you want?" replied the physician, laughing. "It was all for the best that I told you this circumstance then. For who knows whether it would have all come about like this without the singer's last word?"

Ernest Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann

The Deserted House

THEY were all agreed in the belief that the actual facts of life are often far more wonderful than the invention of even the liveliest imagination can be.

"It seems to me," spoke Lelio, "that history gives proof sufficient of this. And that is why the so-called historical romances seem so repulsive and tasteless to us, those stories wherein the author mingles the foolish fancies of his meager brain with the deeds of the great powers of the universe."

Franz took the word. "It is the deep reality of the inscrutable secrets surrounding us that oppresses us with a might wherein we recognize the Spirit that rules, the Spirit out of which our being springs." "Alas," said Lelio, "it is the most terrible result of the fall of man, that we have lost the power of recognizing the eternal verities."

"Many are called, but few are chosen," broke in Franz. "Do you not believe that an understanding of the wonders of our existence is given to some of us in the form of another sense? But if you would allow me to drag the conversation up from these dark regions where we are in danger of losing our path altogether up into the brightness of light-hearted merriment, I would like to make the scurrilous suggestion that those mortals to whom this gift of seeing the Unseen has been given remind me of bats. You know the learned anatomist Spallanzani has discovered a sixth sense in these little animals which can do not only the entire work of the other senses, but work of its own besides."

"Oho," laughed Edward, "according to that, the bats would be the only natural-born clairvoyants. But I know some one who possesses that gift of insight, of which you

were speaking, in a remarkable degree. Because of it he will often follow for days some unknown person who has happened to attract his attention by an oddity in manner, appearance, or garb; he will ponder to melancholy over some trifling incident, some lightly told story; he will combine the antipodes and raise up relationships in his imagination which are unknown to everyone else."

"Wait a bit," cried Lelio. "It is our Theodore of whom you are speaking now. And it looks to me as if he were having some weird vision at this very moment. See how strangely he gazes out into the distance."

Theodore had been sitting in silence up to this moment. Now he spoke: "If my glances are strange it is because they reflect the strange things that were called up before my mental vision by your conversation, the memories of a most remarkable adventure——"

"Oh, tell it to us," interrupted his friends.

"Gladly," continued Theodore. "But first, let me set right a slight confusion in your ideas on the subject of the mysterious. You appear to confound what is merely odd and unusual with what is really mysterious or marvelous, that which surpasses comprehension or belief. The odd and the unusual, it is true, spring often from the truly marvelous, and the twigs and flowers hide the parent stem from our eyes. Both the odd and the unusual and the truly marvelous are mingled in the adventure which I am about to narrate to you, mingled in a manner which is striking and even awesome." With these words Theodore drew from his pocket a notebook in which, as his friends knew, he had written down the impressions of his late journeyings. Refreshing his memory by a look at its pages now and then, he narrated the following story.

You know already that I spent the greater part of last summer in X——. The many old friends and acquaintances I found there, the free, jovial life, the manifold artistic and intellectual interests—all these combined to keep me in that city. I was happy as never before, and found

rich nourishment for my old fondness for wandering alone through the streets, stopping to enjoy every picture in the shop windows, every placard on the walls, or watching the passers-by and choosing some one or the other of them to cast his horoscope secretly to myself.

There is one broad avenue leading to the —— Gate and lined with handsome buildings of all descriptions, which is the meeting place of the rich and fashionable world. The shops which occupy the ground floor of the tall palaces are devoted to the trade in articles of luxury, and the apartments above are the dwellings of people of wealth and position. The aristocratic hotels are to be found in this avenue, the palaces of the foreign ambassadors are there, and you can easily imagine that such a street would be the center of the city's life and gayety.

I had wandered through the avenue several times, when one day my attention was caught by a house which contrasted strangely with the others surrounding it. Picture to yourselves a low building but four windows broad, crowded in between two tall, handsome structures. Its one upper story was little higher than the tops of the ground-floor windows of its neighbors, its roof was dilapidated, its windows patched with paper, its discolored walls spoke of years of neglect. You can imagine how strange such a house must have looked in this street of wealth and fashion. Looking at it more attentively I perceived that the windows of the upper story were tightly closed and curtained, and that a wall had been built to hide the windows of the ground floor. The entrance gate, a little to one side, served also as a doorway for the building, but I could find no sign of latch, lock, or even a bell on this gate. I was convinced that the house must be unoccupied, for at whatever hour of the day I happened to be passing I had never seen the faintest signs of life about it. An unoccupied house in this avenue was indeed an odd sight. But I explained the phenomenon to myself by saying that the owner was doubtless absent upon a long journey, or living upon his country estates, and that he perhaps did not wish to sell or rent the

property, preferring to keep it for his own use in the eventuality of a visit to the city.

You all, the good comrades of my youth, know that I have been prone to consider myself a sort of clairvoyant, claiming to have glimpses of a strange world of wonders, a world which you, with your hard common sense, would attempt to deny or laugh away. I confess that I have often lost myself in mysteries which after all turned out to be no mysteries at all. And it looked at first as if this was to happen to me in the matter of the deserted house, that strange house which drew my steps and my thoughts to itself with a power that surprised me. But the point of my story will prove to you that I am right in asserting that I know more than you do. Listen now to what I am about to tell you.

One day, at the hour in which the fashionable world is accustomed to promenade up and down the avenue, I stood as usual before the deserted house, lost in thought. Suddenly I felt, without looking up, that some one had stopped beside me, fixing his eyes on me. It was Count P., whom I had found much in sympathy with many of my imaginings, and I knew that he also must have been deeply interested in the mystery of this house. It surprised me not a little, therefore, that he should smile ironically when I spoke of the strange impression that this deserted dwelling, here in the gay heart of the town, had made upon me. But I soon discovered the reason for his irony. Count P. had gone much farther than myself in his imaginings concerning the house. He had constructed for himself a complete history of the old building, a story weird enough to have been born in the fancy of a true poet. It would give me great pleasure to relate this story to you, but the events which happened to me in this connection are so interesting that I feel I must proceed with the narration of them at once.

When the count had completed his story to his own satisfaction, imagine his feelings on learning one day that the old house contained nothing more mysterious than a cake

bakery belonging to the pastry cook whose handsome shop adjoined the old structure. The windows of the ground floor were walled up to give protection to the ovens, and the heavy curtains of the upper story were to keep the sunlight from the wares laid out there. When the count informed me of this I felt as if a bucket of cold water had been suddenly thrown over me. The demon who is the enemy of all poets caught the dreamer by the nose and tweaked him painfully.

And yet, in spite of this prosaic explanation, I could not resist stopping before the deserted house whenever I passed it, and gentle tremors rippled through my veins as vague visions arose of what might be hidden there. I could not believe in this story of the cake and candy factory. Through some strange freak of the imagination I felt as a child feels when some fairy tale has been told it to conceal the truth it suspects. I scolded myself for a silly fool; the house remained unaltered in its appearance, and the visions faded in my brain, until one day a chance incident woke them to life again.

I was wandering through the avenue as usual, and as I passed the deserted house I could not resist a hasty glance at its close-curtained upper windows. But as I looked at it, the curtain on the last window near the pastry shop began to move. A hand, an arm, came out from between its folds. I took my opera glass from my pocket and saw a beautifully formed woman's hand, on the little finger of which a large diamond sparkled in unusual brilliancy; a rich bracelet glittered on the white, rounded arm. The hand set a tall, oddly formed crystal bottle on the window ledge and disappeared again behind the curtain.

I stopped as if frozen to stone; a weirdly pleasurable sensation, mingled with awe, streamed through my being with the warmth of an electric current. I stared up at the mysterious window and a sigh of longing arose from the very depths of my heart. When I came to myself again, I was angered to find that I was surrounded by a crowd which stood gazing up at the window with curious faces. I stole

away inconspicuously, and the demon of all things prosaic whispered to me that what I had just seen was the rich pastry cook's wife, in her Sunday adornment, placing an empty bottle, used for rose-water or the like, on the window sill. Nothing very weird about this.

Suddenly a most sensible thought came to me. I turned and entered the shining, mirror-walled shop of the pastry cook. Blowing the steaming foam from my cup of chocolate, I remarked: "You have a very useful addition to your establishment next door." The man leaned over his counter and looked at me with a questioning smile, as if he did not understand me. I repeated that in my opinion he had been very clever to set up his bakery in the neighboring house, although the deserted appearance of the building was a strange sight in its contrasting surroundings. "Why, sir," began the pastry cook, "who told you that the house next door belongs to us? Unfortunately every attempt on our part to acquire it has been in vain, and I fancy it is all the better so, for there is something queer about the place."

You can imagine, dear friends, how interested I became upon hearing these words, and that I begged the man to tell me more about the house.

"I do not know anything very definite, sir," he said. "All that we know for a certainty is that the house belongs to the Countess S., who lives on her estates and has not been to the city for years. This house, so they tell me, stood in its present shape before any of the handsome buildings were raised which are now the pride of our avenue, and in all these years there has been nothing done to it except to keep it from actual decay. Two living creatures alone dwell there, an aged misanthrope of a steward and his melancholy dog, which occasionally howls at the moon from the back courtyard. According to the general story the deserted house is haunted. In very truth my brother, who is the owner of this shop, and myself have often, when our business kept us awake during the silence of the night, heard strange sounds from the other side of the wall.

There was a rumbling and a scraping that frightened us both. And not very long ago we heard one night a strange singing which I could not describe to you. It was evidently the voice of an old woman, but the tones were so sharp and clear, and ran up to the top of the scale in cadences and long trills, the like of which I have never heard before, although I have heard many singers in many lands. It seemed to be a French song, but I am not quite sure of that, for I could not listen long to the mad, ghostly singing, it made the hair stand erect on my head. And at times, after the street noises are quiet, we can hear deep sighs, and sometimes a mad laugh, which seem to come out of the earth. But if you lay your ear to the wall in our back room, you can hear that the noises come from the house next door." He led me into the back room and pointed through the window. "And do you see that iron chimney coming out of the wall there? It smokes so heavily sometimes, even in summer when there are no fires used, that my brother has often quarreled with the old steward about it, fearing danger. But the old man excuses himself by saying that he was cooking his food. Heaven knows what the queer creature may eat, for often, when the pipe is smoking heavily, a strange and queer smell can be smelled all over the house."

The glass doors of the shop creaked in opening. The pastry cook hurried into the front room, and when he had nodded to the figure now entering he threw a meaning glance at me. I understood him perfectly. Who else could this strange guest be, but the steward who had charge of the mysterious house! Imagine a thin little man with a face the color of a mummy, with a sharp nose, tight-set lips, green cat's eyes, and a crazy smile; his hair dressed in the old-fashioned style with a high toupet and a bag at the back, and heavily powdered. He wore a faded old brown coat which was carefully brushed, gray stockings, and broad, flat-toed shoes with buckles. And imagine further, that in spite of his meagerness this little person is robustly built, with huge fists and long, strong fingers, and

that he walks to the shop counter with a strong, firm step, smiling his imbecile smile, and whining out: "A couple of candied oranges—a couple of macaroons—a couple of sugared chestnuts—" Picture all this to yourself and judge whether I had not sufficient cause to imagine a mystery here.

The pastry cook gathered up the wares the old man had demanded. "Weigh it out, weigh it out, honored neighbor," moaned the strange man, as he drew out a little leathern bag and sought in it for his money. I noticed that he paid for his purchase in worn old coins, some of which were no longer in use. He seemed very unhappy and murmured: "Sweet—sweet—it must all be sweet! Well, let it be! The devil has pure honey for his bride—pure honey!"

The pastry cook smiled at me and then spoke to the old man. "You do not seem to be quite well. Yes, yes, old age, old age! It takes the strength from our limbs." The old man's expression did not change, but his voice went up: "Old age?—Old age?—Lose strength?—Grow weak?—Oho!" And with this he clapped his hands together until the joints cracked, and sprang high up into the air until the entire shop trembled and the glass vessels on the walls and counters rattled and shook. But in the same moment a hideous screaming was heard; the old man had stepped on his black dog, which, creeping in behind him, had laid itself at his feet on the floor. "Devilish beast—dog of hell!" groaned the old man in his former miserable tone, opening his bag and giving the dog a large macaroon. The dog, which had burst out into a cry of distress that was truly human, was quiet at once, sat down on its haunches, and gnawed at the macaroon like a squirrel. When it had finished its tidbit, the old man had also finished the packing up and putting away of his purchases. "Good night, honored neighbor," he spoke, taking the hand of the pastry cook and pressing it until the latter cried aloud in pain. "The weak old man wishes you a good night, most honorable Sir Neighbor," he repeated, and then walked from the shop, followed closely by his black dog. The old

man did not seem to have noticed me at all. I was quite dumfoundered in my astonishment.

"There, you see," began the pastry cook. "This is the way he acts when he comes in here, two or three times a month, it is. But I can get nothing out of him except the fact that he was a former valet of Count S., that he is now in charge of this house here, and that every day—for many years now—he expects the arrival of his master's family. My brother spoke to him one day about the strange noises at night; but he answered calmly, 'Yes, people say the ghosts walk about in the house. But do not believe it, for it is not true." The hour was now come when fashion demanded that the elegant world of the city should assemble in this attractive shop. The doors opened incessantly, the place was thronged, and I could ask no further questions.

This much I knew, that Count P.'s information about the ownership and the use of the house were not correct; also, that the old steward, in spite of his denial, was not living alone there, and that some mystery was hidden behind its discolored walls. How could I combine the story of the strange and grewsome singing with the appearance of the beautiful arm at the window? That arm could not be part of the wrinkled body of an old woman; the singing, according to the pastry cook's story, could not come from the throat of a blooming and youthful maiden. I decided in favor of the arm, as it was easy to explain to myself that some trick of acoustics had made the voice sound sharp and old, or that it had appeared so only in the pastry cook's fear-distorted imagination. Then I thought of the smoke, the strange odors, the oddly formed crystal bottle that I had seen, and soon the vision of a beautiful creature held enthralled by fatal magic stood as if alive before my mental vision. The old man became a wizard who, perhaps quite independently of the family he served, had set up his devil's kitchen in the deserted house. My imagination had begun to work, and in my dreams that night I saw clearly the hand with the sparkling diamond on its

finger, the arm with the shining bracelet. From out thin, gray mists there appeared a sweet face with sadly imploring blue eyes, then the entire exquisite figure of a beautiful girl. And I saw that what I had thought was mist was the fine steam flowing out in circles from a crystal bottle held in the hands of the vision.

"Oh, fairest creature of my dreams," I cried in rapture. "Reveal to me where thou art, what it is that enthralls thee. Ah, I know it! It is black magic that holds thee captive—thou art the unhappy slave of that malicious devil who wanders about brown-clad and bewigged in pastry shops, scattering their wares with his unholy springing, and feeding his demon dog on macaroons, after they have howled out a Satanic measure in five-eight time. Oh, I know it all, thou fair and charming vision. The diamond is the reflection of the fire of thy heart. But that bracelet about thine arm is a link of the chain which the brown-clad one says is a magnetic chain. Do not believe it, O glorious one! See how it shines in the blue fire from the retort. One moment more and thou art free. And now, O maiden, open thy rosebud mouth and tell me—" In this moment a gnarled fist leaped over my shoulder and clutched at the crystal bottle, which sprang into a thousand pieces in the air. With a faint, sad moan, the charming vision faded into the blackness of the night.

When morning came to put an end to my dreaming I hurried to the avenue and placed myself before the deserted house. Heavy blinds were drawn before the upper windows. The street was still quite empty, and I stepped close to the windows of the ground floor and listened and listened; but I heard no sound. The house was as quiet as the grave. The business of the day began, the passers-by became more numerous, and I was obliged to go on. I will not weary you with the recital of how for many days I crept about the house at that hour, but without discovering anything of interest. None of my questionings could reveal anything to me, and the beautiful picture of my vision began finally to pale and fade away.

At last as I passed, late one evening, I saw that the door of the deserted house was half open and the brown-clad old man was peeping out. I stepped quickly to his side with a sudden idea. "Does not Councilor Binder live in this house?" Thus I asked the old man, pushing him before me as I entered the dimly lighted vestibule. The guardian of the old house looked at me with his piercing eyes, and answered in gentle, slow tones: "No, he does not live here, he never has lived here, he never will live here, he does not live anywhere on this avenue. But people say the ghosts walk about in this house. Yet I can assure you that it is not true. It is a quiet, a pretty house, and to-morrow the gracious Countess S. will move into it. Good night, dear gentleman." With these words the old man maneuvered me out of the house and locked the gate behind me. I heard his feet drag across the floor, I heard his coughing and the rattling of his bunch of keys, and I heard him descend some steps. Then all was silent. During the short time that I had been in the house I had noticed that the corridor was hung with old tapestries and furnished like a drawing-room with large, heavy chairs in red damask.

And now, as if called into life by my entrance into the mysterious house, my adventures began. The following day, as I walked through the avenue in the noon hour, and my eyes sought the deserted house as usual, I saw something glistening in the last window of the upper story. Coming nearer I noticed that the outer blind had been quite drawn up and the inner curtain slightly opened. The sparkle of a diamond met my eye. O kind Heaven! The face of my dream looked at me, gently imploring, from above the rounded arm on which her head was resting. But how was it possible to stand still in the moving crowd without attracting attention? Suddenly I caught sight of the benches placed in the gravel walk in the center of the avenue, and I saw that one of them was directly opposite the house. I sprang over to it, and leaning over its back, I could stare up at the mysterious window un-

disturbed. Yes, it was she, the charming maiden of my dream! But her eye did not seem to seek me as I had at first thought; her glance was cold and unfocused, and had it not been for an occasional motion of the hand and arm, I might have thought that I was looking at a cleverly painted picture.

I was so lost in my adoration of the mysterious being in the window, so aroused and excited throughout all my nerve centers, that I did not hear the shrill voice of an Italian street hawker, who had been offering me his wares for some time. Finally he touched me on the arm; I turned hastily and commanded him to let me alone. But he did not cease his entreaties, asserting that he had earned nothing to-day, and begging me to buy some small trifle from him. Full of impatience to get rid of him I put my hand in my pocket. With the words: "I have more beautiful things here," he opened the under drawer of his box and held out to me a little, round pocket mirror. In it, as he held it up before my face, I could see the deserted house behind me, the window, and the sweet face of my vision there.

I bought the little mirror at once, for I saw that it would make it possible for me to sit comfortably and inconspicuously, and yet watch the window. The longer I looked at the reflection in the glass, the more I fell captive to a weird and quite indescribable sensation, which I might almost call a waking dream. It was as if a lethargy had lamed my eyes, holding them fastened on the glass beyond my power to loosen them. Through my mind there rushed the memory of an old nurse's tale of my earliest childhood. When my nurse was taking me off to bed, and I showed an inclination to stand peering into the great mirror in my father's room, she would tell me that when children looked into mirrors in the night time they would see a strange, hideous face there, and their eyes would be frozen so that they could not move them again. The thought struck awe to my soul, but I could not resist a peep at the mirror, I was so curious to see the strange face. Once I did be-

lieve that I saw two hideous glowing eyes shining out of the mirror. I screamed and fell down in a swoon.

All these foolish memories of my early childhood came trooping back to me. My blood ran cold through my veins. I would have thrown the mirror from me, but I could not. And now at last the beautiful eyes of the fair vision looked at *me*, her glance sought mine and shone deep down into my heart. The terror I had felt left me, giving way to the pleasurable pain of sweetest longing.

"You have a pretty little mirror there," said a voice beside me. I awoke from my dream, and was not a little confused when I saw smiling faces looking at me from either side. Several persons had sat down upon my bench, and it was quite certain that my staring into the window, and my probably strange expression, had afforded them great cause for amusement.

"You have a pretty little mirror there," repeated the man, as I did not answer him. His glance said more, and asked without words the reason of my staring so oddly into the little glass. He was an elderly man, neatly dressed, and his voice and eyes were so full of good nature that I could not refuse him my confidence. I told him that I had been looking in the mirror at the picture of a beautiful maiden who was sitting at a window of the deserted house. I went even farther; I asked the old man if he had not seen the fair face himself. "Over there? In the old house —in the last window?" He repeated my questions in a tone of surprise.

"Yes, yes," I exclaimed.

The old man smiled and answered: "Well, well, that was a strange delusion. My old eyes—thank Heaven for my old eyes! Yes, yes, sir. I saw a pretty face in the window there, with my own eyes; but it seemed to me to be an excellently well-painted oil portrait."

I turned quickly and looked toward the window; there was no one there, and the blind had been pulled down. "Yes," continued the old man, "yes, sir. Now it is too late to make sure of the matter, for just now the servant,

who, as I know, lives there alone in the house of the Countess S., took the picture away from the window after he had dusted it, and let down the blinds."

"Was it, then, surely a picture?" I asked again, in bewilderment.

"You can trust my eyes," replied the old man. "The optical delusion was strengthened by your seeing only the reflection in the mirror. And when I was in your years it was easy enough for my fancy to call up the picture of a beautiful maiden."

"But the hand and arm moved," I exclaimed. "Oh, yes, they moved, indeed they moved," said the old man smiling, as he patted me on the shoulder. Then he arose to go, and bowing politely, closed his remarks with the words, "Beware of mirrors which can lie so vividly. Your obedient servant, sir."

You can imagine how I felt when I saw that he looked upon me as a foolish fantast. I began to be convinced that the old man was right, and that it was only my absurd imagination which insisted on raising up mysteries about the deserted house.

I hurried home full of anger and disgust, and promised myself that I would not think of the mysterious house, and would not even walk through the avenue for several days. I kept my vow, spending my days working at my desk, and my evenings in the company of jovial friends, leaving myself no time to think of the mysteries which so enthralled me. And yet, it was just in these days that I would start up out of my sleep as if awakened by a touch, only to find that all that had aroused me was merely the *thought* of that mysterious being whom I had seen in my vision and in the window of the deserted house. Even during my work, or in the midst of a lively conversation with my friends, I felt the same thought shoot through me like an electric current. I condemned the little mirror in which I had seen the charming picture to a prosaic daily use. I placed it on my dressing-table that I might bind my cravat before it, and thus it happened one day, when I was

about to utilize it for this important business, that its glass seemed dull, and that I took it up and breathed on it to rub it bright again. My heart seemed to stand still, every fiber in me trembled in delightful awe. Yes, that is all the name I can find for the feeling that came over me, when, as my breath clouded the little mirror, I saw the beautiful face of my dreams arise and smile at me through blue mists. You laugh at me? You look upon me as an incorrigible dreamer? Think what you will about it—the fair face looked at me from out of the mirror! But as soon as the clouding vanished, the face vanished in the brightened glass.

I will not weary you with a detailed recital of my sensations the next few days. I will only say that I repeated again the experiments with the mirror, sometimes with success, sometimes without. When I had not been able to call up the vision, I would run to the deserted house and stare up at the windows; but I saw no human being anywhere about the building. I lived only in thoughts of my vision; everything else seemed indifferent to me. I neglected my friends and my studies. The tortures in my soul passed over into, or rather mingled with, physical sensations which frightened me, and which at last made me fear for my reason. One day, after an unusually severe attack, I put my little mirror in my pocket and hurried to the home of Dr. K., who was noted for his treatment of those diseases of the mind out of which physical diseases so often grow. I told him my story; I did not conceal the slightest incident from him, and I implored him to save me from the terrible fate which seemed to threaten me. He listened to me quietly, but I read astonishment in his glance. Then he said: "The danger is not as near as you believe, and I think that I may say that it can be easily prevented. You are undergoing an unusual psychical disturbance, beyond a doubt. But the fact that you understand that some evil principle seems to be trying to influence you, gives you a weapon by which you can combat it. Leave your little mirror here with me, and force yourself to take up

with some work which will afford scope for all your mental energy. Do not go to the avenue; work all day, from early to late, then take a long walk, and spend your evenings in the company of your friends. Eat heartily, and drink heavy, nourishing wines. You see I am endeavoring to combat your fixed idea of the face in the window of the deserted house and in the mirror, by diverting your mind to other things, and by strengthening your body. You yourself must help me in this."

I was very reluctant to part with my mirror. The physician, who had already taken it, seemed to notice my hesitation. He breathed upon the glass and holding it up to me, he asked: "Do you see anything?"

"Nothing at all," I answered, for so it was.

"Now breathe on the glass yourself," said the physician, laying the mirror in my hands.

I did as he requested. There was the vision even more clearly than ever before.

"There she is!" I cried aloud.

The physician looked into the glass, and then said: "I cannot see anything. But I will confess to you that when I looked into this glass, a queer shiver overcame me, passing away almost at once. Now do it once more."

I breathed upon the glass again and the physician laid his hand upon the back of my neck. The face appeared again, and the physician, looking into the mirror over my shoulder, turned pale. Then he took the little glass from my hands, looked at it attentively, and locked it into his desk, returning to me after a few moments' silent thought.

"Follow my instructions strictly," he said. "I must confess to you that I do not yet understand those moments of your vision. But I hope to be able to tell you more about it very soon."

Difficult as it was to me, I forced myself to live absolutely according to the doctor's orders. I soon felt the benefit of the steady work and the nourishing diet, and yet I was not free from those terrible attacks, which would come either at noon, or, more intensely still, at midnight. Even

in the midst of a merry company, in the enjoyment of wine and song, glowing daggers seemed to pierce my heart, and all the strength of my intellect was powerless to resist their might over me. I was obliged to retire, and could not return to my friends until I had recovered from my condition of lethargy. It was in one of these attacks, an unusually strong one, that such an irresistible, mad longing for the picture of my dreams came over me, that I hurried out into the street and ran toward the mysterious house. While still at a distance from it, I seemed to see lights shining out through the fast-closed blinds, but when I came nearer I saw that all was dark. Crazy with my desire I rushed to the door; it fell back before the pressure of my hand. I stood in the dimly lighted vestibule, enveloped in a heavy, close atmosphere. My heart beat in strange fear and impatience. Then suddenly a long, sharp tone, as from a woman's throat, shrilled through the house. I know not how it happened that I found myself suddenly in a great hall brilliantly lighted and furnished in old-fashioned magnificence of golden chairs and strange Japanese ornaments. Strongly perfumed incense arose in blue clouds about me. "Welcome—welcome, sweet bridegroom! the hour has come, our bridal hour!" I heard these words in a woman's voice, and as little as I can tell, how I came into the room, just so little do I know how it happened that suddenly a tall, youthful figure, richly dressed, seemed to arise from the blue mists. With the repeated shrill cry: "Welcome, sweet bridegroom!" she came toward me with outstretched arms—and a yellow face, distorted with age and madness, stared into mine! I fell back in terror, but the fiery, piercing glance of her eyes, like the eyes of a snake, seemed to hold me spellbound. I did not seem able to turn my eyes from this terrible old woman, I could not move another step. She came still nearer, and it seemed to me suddenly as if her hideous face were only a thin mask, beneath which I saw the features of the beautiful maiden of my vision. Already I felt the touch of her hands, when suddenly she

fell at my feet with a loud scream, and a voice behind me cried:

"Oho, is the devil playing his tricks with your grace again? To bed, to bed, your grace. Else there will be blows, mighty blows!"

I turned quickly and saw the old steward in his night clothes, swinging a whip above his head. He was about to strike the screaming figure at my feet when I caught at his arm. But he shook me from him, exclaiming: "The devil, sir! That old Satan would have murdered you if I had not come to your aid. Get away from here at once!"

I rushed from the hall, and sought in vain in the darkness for the door of the house. Behind me I heard the hissing blows of the whip and the old woman's screams. I drew breath to call aloud for help, when suddenly the ground gave way under my feet; I fell down a short flight of stairs, bringing up with such force against a door at the bottom that it sprang open, and I measured my length on the floor of a small room. From the hastily vacated bed, and from the familiar brown coat hanging over a chair, I saw that I was in the bedchamber of the old steward. There was a trampling on the stair, and the old man himself entered hastily, throwing himself at my feet. "By all the saints, sir," he entreated with folded hands, "whoever you may be, and however her grace, that old Satan of a witch has managed to entice you to this house, do not speak to anyone of what has happened here. It will cost me my position. Her crazy excellency has been punished, and is bound fast in her bed. Sleep well, good sir, sleep softly and sweetly. It is a warm and beautiful July night. There is no moon, but the stars shine brightly. A quiet good night to you." While talking, the old man had taken up a lamp, had led me out of the basement, pushed me out of the house door, and locked it behind me. I hurried home quite bewildered, and you can imagine that I was too much confused by the grewsome secret to be able to form any explanation of it in my own mind for the first few days. Only this much was certain, that I was

now free from the evil spell that had held me captive so long. All my longing for the magic vision in the mirror had disappeared, and the memory of the scene in the deserted house was like the recollection of an unexpected visit to a madhouse. It was evident beyond a doubt that the steward was the tyrannical guardian of a crazy woman of noble birth, whose condition was to be hidden from the world. But the mirror? and all the other magic? Listen, and I will tell you more about it.

Some few days later I came upon Count P. at an evening entertainment. He drew me to one side and said, with a smile, "Do you know that the secrets of our deserted house are beginning to be revealed?" I listened with interest; but before the count could say more the doors of the dining-room were thrown open, and the company proceeded to the table. Quite lost in thought at the words I had just heard, I had given a young lady my arm, and had taken my place mechanically in the ceremonious procession. I led my companion to the seats arranged for us, and then turned to look at her for the first time. The vision of my mirror stood before me, feature for feature, there was no deception possible! I trembled to my innermost heart, as you can imagine; but I discovered that there was not the slightest echo even, in my heart, of the mad desire which had ruled me so entirely when my breath drew out the magic picture from the glass. My astonishment, or rather my terror, must have been apparent in my eyes. The girl looked at me in such surprise that I endeavored to control myself sufficiently to remark that I must have met her somewhere before. Her short answer, to the effect that this could hardly be possible, as she had come to the city only yesterday for the first time in her life, bewildered me still more and threw me into an awkward silence. The sweet glance from her gentle eyes brought back my courage, and I began a tentative exploring of this new companion's mind. I found that I had before me a sweet and delicate being, suffering from some psychic trouble. At a particularly merry turn of the conversation, when I would throw

in a daring word like a dash of pepper, she would smile, but her smile was pained, as if a wound had been touched. "You are not very merry to-night, countess. Was it the visit this morning?" An officer sitting near us had spoken these words to my companion, but before he could finish his remark his neighbor had grasped him by the arm and whispered something in his ear, while a lady at the other side of the table, with glowing cheeks and angry eyes, began to talk loudly of the opera she had heard last evening. Tears came to the eyes of the girl sitting beside me. "Am I not foolish?" She turned to me. A few moments before she had complained of headache. "Merely the usual evidences of a nervous headache," I answered in an easy tone, "and there is nothing better for it than the merry spirit which bubbles in the foam of this poet's nectar." With these words I filled her champagne glass, and she sipped at it as she threw me a look of gratitude. Her mood brightened, and all would have been well had I not touched a glass before me with unexpected strength, arousing from it a shrill, high tone. My companion grew deadly pale, and I myself felt a sudden shiver, for the sound had exactly the tone of the mad woman's voice in the deserted house.

While we were drinking coffee I made an opportunity to get to the side of Count P. He understood the reason for my movement. "Do you know that your neighbor is Countess Edwina S.? And do you know also that it is her mother's sister who lives in the deserted house, incurably mad for many years? This morning both mother and daughter went to see the unfortunate woman. The old steward, the only person who is able to control the countess in her outbreaks, is seriously ill, and they say that the sister has finally revealed the secret to Dr. K. This eminent physician will endeavor to cure the patient, or if this is not possible, at least to prevent her terrible outbreaks of mania. This is all that I know yet."

Others joined us and we were obliged to change the subject. Dr. K. was the physician to whom I had turned in my own anxiety, and you can well imagine that I hurried

to him as soon as I was free, and told him all that had happened to me in the last days. I asked him to tell me as much as he could about the mad woman, for my own peace of mind; and this is what I learned from him under promise of secrecy.

"Angelica, Countess Z.," thus the doctor began, "had already passed her thirtieth year, but was still in full possession of great beauty, when Count S., although much younger than she, became so fascinated by her charm that he wooed her with ardent devotion and followed her to her father's home to try his luck there. But scarcely had the count entered the house, scarcely had he caught sight of Angelica's younger sister, Gabrielle, when he awoke as from a dream. The elder sister appeared faded and colorless beside Gabrielle, whose beauty and charm so enthralled the count that he begged her hand of her father. Count Z. gave his consent easily, as there was no doubt of Gabrielle's feelings toward her suitor. Angelica did not show the slightest anger at her lover's faithlessness. 'He believes that he has forsaken me, the foolish boy! He does not perceive that he was but my toy, a toy of which I had tired.' Thus she spoke in proud scorn, and not a look or an action on her part belied her words. But after the ceremonious betrothal of Gabrielle to Count S., Angelica was seldom seen by the members of her family. She did not appear at the dinner table, and it was said that she spent most of her time walking alone in the neighboring wood.

"A strange occurrence disturbed the monotonous quiet of life in the castle. The hunters of Count Z., assisted by peasants from the village, had captured a band of gypsies who were accused of several robberies and murders which had happened recently in the neighborhood. The men were brought to the castle courtyard, fettered together on a long chain, while the women and children were packed on a cart. Noticeable among the last was a tall, haggard old woman of terrifying aspect, wrapped from head to foot in a red shawl. She stood upright in the cart, and in an imperious tone demanded that she should be allowed to

descend. The guards were so awed by her manner and appearance that they obeyed her at once.

" Count Z. came down to the courtyard and commanded that the gang should be placed in the prisons under the castle. Suddenly Countess Angelica rushed out of the door, her hair all loose, fear and anxiety in her pale face. Throwing herself on her knees, she cried in a piercing voice, ' Let these people go! Let these people go! They are innocent! Father, let these people go! If you shed one drop of their blood I will pierce my heart with this knife!' The countess swung a shining knife in the air and then sank swooning to the ground. ' Yes, my beautiful darling—my golden child—I knew you would not let them hurt us,' shrilled the old woman in red. She cowered beside the countess and pressed disgusting kisses to her face and breast, murmuring crazy words. She took from out the recesses of her shawl a little vial in which a tiny goldfish seemed to swim in some silver-clear liquid. She held the vial to the countess's heart. The latter regained consciousness immediately. When her eyes fell on the gypsy woman, she sprang up, clasped the old creature ardently in her arms, and hurried with her into the castle.

" Count Z., Gabrielle, and her lover, who had come out during this scene, watched it in astonished awe. The gypsies appeared quite indifferent. They were loosed from their chains and taken separately to the prisons. Next morning Count Z. called the villagers together. The gypsies were led before them and the count announced that he had found them to be innocent of the crimes of which they were accused, and that he would grant them free passage through his domains. To the astonishment of all present, their fetters were struck off and they were set at liberty. The red-shawled woman was not among them. It was whispered that the gypsy captain, recognizable from the golden chain about his neck and the red feather in his high Spanish hat, had paid a secret visit to the count's room the night before. But it was discovered, a short time after the release of the gypsies, that they were

indeed guiltless of the robberies and murders that had disturbed the district.

" The date set for Gabrielle's wedding approached. One day, to her great astonishment, she saw several large wagons in the courtyard being packed high with furniture, clothing, linen, with everything necessary for a complete household outfit. The wagons were driven away, and the following day Count Z. explained that, for many reasons, he had thought it best to grant Angelica's odd request that she be allowed to set up her own establishment in his house in X. He had given the house to her, and had promised her that no member of the family, not even he himself, should enter it without her express permission. He added also, that, at her urgent request, he had permitted his own valet to accompany her, to take charge of her household.

" When the wedding festivities were over, Count S. and his bride departed for their home, where they spent a year in cloudless happiness. Then the count's health failed mysteriously. It was as if some secret sorrow gnawed at his vitals, robbing him of joy and strength. All efforts of his young wife to discover the source of his trouble were fruitless. At last, when the constantly recurring fainting spells threatened to endanger his very life, he yielded to the entreaties of his physicians and left his home, ostensibly for Pisa. His young wife was prevented from accompanying him by the delicate condition of her own health.

" And now," said the doctor, " the information given me by Countess S. became, from this point on, so rhapsodical that a keen observer only could guess at the true coherence of the story. Her baby, a daughter, born during her husband's absence, was spirited away from the house, and all search for it was fruitless. Her grief at this loss deepened to despair, when she received a message from her father stating that her husband, whom all believed to be in Pisa, had been found dying of heart trouble in Angelica's home in X., and that Angelica herself had become a dangerous maniac. The old count added that all this horror had

so shaken his own nerves that he feared he would not long survive it.

"As soon as Gabrielle was able to leave her bed, she hurried to her father's castle. One night, prevented from sleeping by visions of the loved ones she had lost, she seemed to hear a faint crying, like that of an infant, before the door of her chamber. Lighting her candle she opened the door. Great Heaven! there cowered the old gypsy woman, wrapped in her red shawl, staring up at her with eyes that seemed already glazing in death. In her arms she held a little child, whose crying had aroused the countess. Gabrielle's heart beat high with joy—it was her child—her lost daughter! She snatched the infant from the gypsy's arms, just as the woman fell at her feet lifeless. The countess's screams awoke the house, but the gypsy was quite dead and no effort to revive her met with success.

"The old count hurried to X. to endeavor to discover something that would throw light upon the mysterious disappearance and reappearance of the child. Angelica's madness had frightened away all her female servants; the valet alone remained with her. She appeared at first to have become quite calm and sensible. But when the count told her the story of Gabrielle's child she clapped her hands and laughed aloud, crying: 'Did the little darling arrive? You buried her, you say? How the feathers of the gold pheasant shine in the sun! Have you seen the green lion with the fiery blue eyes?' Horrified the count perceived that Angelica's mind was gone beyond a doubt, and he resolved to take her back with him to his estates, in spite of the warnings of his old valet. At the mere suggestion of removing her from the house Angelica's ravings increased to such an extent as to endanger her own life and that of the others.

"When a lucid interval came again Angelica entreated her father, with many tears, to let her live and die in the house she had chosen. Touched by her terrible trouble he granted her request, although he believed the confession

which slipped from her lips during this scene to be a fantasy of her madness. She told him that Count S. had returned to her arms, and that the child which the gypsy had taken to her father's house was the fruit of their love. The rumor went abroad in the city that Count Z. had taken the unfortunate woman to his home; but the truth was that she remained hidden in the deserted house under the care of the valet. Count Z. died a short time ago, and Countess Gabrielle came here with her daughter Edwina to arrange some family affairs. It was not possible for her to avoid seeing her unfortunate sister. Strange things must have happened during this visit, but the countess has not confided anything to me, saying merely that she had found it necessary to take the mad woman away from the old valet. It had been discovered that he had controlled her outbreaks by means of force and physical cruelty; and that also, allured by Angelica's assertions that she could make gold, he had allowed himself to assist her in her weird operations.

"It would be quite unnecessary," thus the physician ended his story, "to say anything more to you about the deeper inward relationship of all these strange things. It is clear to my mind that it was you who brought about the catastrophe, a catastrophe which will mean recovery or speedy death for the sick woman. And now I will confess to you that I was not a little alarmed, horrified even, to discover that—when I had set myself in magnetic communication with you by placing my hand on your neck—I could see the picture in the mirror with my own eyes. We both know now that the reflection in the glass was the face of Countess Edwina."

I repeat Dr. K.'s words in saying that, to my mind also, there is no further comment that can be made on all these facts. I consider it equally unnecessary to discuss at any further length with you now the mysterious relationship between Angelica, Edwina, the old valet, and myself—a relationship which seemed the work of a malicious demon who was playing his tricks with us. I will add only that

I left the city soon after all these events, driven from the place by an oppression I could not shake off. The uncanny sensation left me suddenly a month or so later, giving way to a feeling of intense relief that flowed through all my veins with the warmth of an electric current. I am convinced that this change within me came about in the moment when the mad woman died.

Thus did Theodore end his narrative. His friends had much to say about his strange adventure, and they agreed with him that the odd and unusual, and the truly marvelous as well, were mingled in a strange and grewsome manner in his story. When they parted for the night, Franz shook Theodore's hand gently, as he said with a smile: "Good night, you Spallanzani bat, you."

Anton Chekhoff

The Safety Match

ON the morning of October 6, 1885, in the office of the Inspector of Police of the second division of S—— District, there appeared a respectably dressed young man, who announced that his master, Marcus Ivanovitch Klausoff, a retired officer of the Horse Guards, separated from his wife, had been murdered. While making this announcement the young man was white and terribly agitated. His hands trembled and his eyes were full of terror.

"Whom have I the honor of addressing?" asked the inspector.

"Psyekoff, Lieutenant Klausoff's agent; agriculturist and mechanician!"

The inspector and his deputy, on visiting the scene of the occurrence in company with Psyekoff, found the following: Near the wing in which Klausoff had lived was gathered a dense crowd. The news of the murder had sped swift as lightning through the neighborhood, and the peasantry, thanks to the fact that the day was a holiday, had hurried together from all the neighboring villages. There was much commotion and talk. Here and there, pale, tear-stained faces were seen. The door of Klausoff's bedroom was found locked. The key was inside.

"It is quite clear that the scoundrels got in by the window!" said Psyekoff as they examined the door.

They went to the garden, into which the bedroom window opened. The window looked dark and ominous. It was covered by a faded green curtain. One corner of the curtain was slightly turned up, which made it possible to look into the bedroom.

"Did any of you look into the window?" asked the inspector.

"Certainly not, your worship!" answered Ephraim, the gardener, a little gray-haired old man, who looked like a retired sergeant. "Who's going to look in, if all their bones are shaking?"

"Ah, Marcus Ivanovitch, Marcus Ivanovitch!" sighed the inspector, looking at the window, "I told you you would come to a bad end! I told the dear man, but he wouldn't listen! Dissipation doesn't bring any good!"

"Thanks to Ephraim," said Psyekoff; "but for him, we would never have guessed. He was the first to guess that something was wrong. He comes to me this morning, and says: 'Why is the master so long getting up? He hasn't left his bedroom for a whole week!' The moment he said that, it was just as if some one had hit me with an ax. The thought flashed through my mind, 'We haven't had a sight of him since last Saturday, and to-day is Sunday'! Seven whole days—not a doubt of it!"

"Ay, poor fellow!" again sighed the inspector. "He was a clever fellow, finely educated, and kind-hearted at that! And in society, nobody could touch him! But he was a waster, God rest his soul! I was prepared for anything since he refused to live with Olga Petrovna. Poor thing, a good wife, but a sharp tongue! Stephen!" the inspector called to one of his deputies, "go over to my house this minute, and send Andrew to the captain to lodge an information with him! Tell him that Marcus Ivanovitch has been murdered. And run over to the orderly; why should he sit there, kicking his heels? Let him come here! And go as fast as you can to the examining magistrate, Nicholas Yermolaïyevitch. Tell him to come over here! Wait; I'll write him a note!"

The inspector posted sentinels around the wing, wrote a letter to the examining magistrate, and then went over to the director's for a glass of tea. Ten minutes later he was sitting on a stool, carefully nibbling a lump of sugar, and swallowing the scalding tea.

"There you are!" he was saying to Psyekoff; "there you are! A noble by birth! a rich man—a favorite of the gods, you may say, as Pushkin has it, and what did he come to? He drank and dissipated and—there you are—he's murdered."

After a couple of hours the examining magistrate drove up. Nicholas Yermolaïyevitch Chubikoff—for that was the magistrate's name—was a tall, fleshy old man of sixty, who had been wrestling with the duties of his office for a quarter of a century. Everybody in the district knew him as an honest man, wise, energetic, and in love with his work. He was accompanied to the scene of the murder by his inveterate companion, fellow worker, and secretary, Dukovski, a tall young fellow of twenty-six.

"Is it possible, gentlemen?" cried Chubikoff, entering Psyekoff's room, and quickly shaking hands with everyone. Is it possible? Marcus Ivanovitch? Murdered? No! It is impossible! Im-poss-i-ble!"

"Go in there!" sighed the inspector.

"Lord, have mercy on us! Only last Friday I saw him at the fair in Farabankoff. I had a drink of vodka with him, save the mark!"

"Go in there!" again sighed the inspector.

They sighed, uttered exclamations of horror, drank a glass of tea each, and went to the wing.

"Get back!" the orderly cried to the peasants.

Going to the wing, the examining magistrate began his work by examining the bedroom door. The door proved to be of pine, painted yellow, and was uninjured. Nothing was found which could serve as a clew. They had to break in the door.

"Everyone not here on business is requested to keep away!" said the magistrate, when, after much hammering and shaking, the door yielded to ax and chisel. "I request this, in the interest of the investigation. Orderly, don't let anyone in!"

Chubikoff, his assistant, and the inspector opened the door, and hesitatingly, one after the other, entered the

room. Their eyes met the following sight: Beside the single window stood the big wooden bed with a huge feather mattress. On the crumpled feather bed lay a tumbled, crumpled quilt. The pillow, in a cotton pillow-case, also much crumpled, was dragging on the floor. On the table beside the bed lay a silver watch and a silver twenty-kopeck piece. Beside them lay some sulphur matches. Beside the bed, the little table, and the single chair, there was no furniture in the room. Looking under the bed, the inspector saw a couple of dozen empty bottles, an old straw hat, and a quart of vodka. Under the table lay one top boot, covered with dust. Casting a glance around the room, the magistrate frowned and grew red in the face.

"Scoundrels!" he muttered, clenching his fists.

"And where is Marcus Ivanovitch?" asked Dukovski in a low voice.

"Mind your own business!" Chubikoff answered roughly. "Be good enough to examine the floor! This is not the first case of the kind I have had to deal with! Eugraph Kuzmitch," he said, turning to the inspector, and lowering his voice, "in 1870 I had another case like this. But you must remember it—the murder of the merchant Portraitoff. It was just the same there. The scoundrels murdered him, and dragged the corpse out through the window——"

Chubikoff went up to the window, pulled the curtain to one side, and carefully pushed the window. The window opened.

"It opens, you see! It wasn't fastened. Hm! There are tracks under the window. Look! There is the track of a knee! Somebody got in there. We must examine the window thoroughly."

"There is nothing special to be found on the floor," said Dukovski. "No stains or scratches. The only thing I found was a struck safety match. Here it is! So far as I remember, Marcus Ivanovitch did not smoke. And he always used sulphur matches, never safety matches. Perhaps this safety match may serve as a clew!"

"Oh, do shut up!" cried the magistrate deprecatingly. "You go on about your match! I can't abide these dreamers! Instead of chasing matches, you had better examine the bed!"

After a thorough examination of the bed, Dukovski reported:

"There are no spots, either of blood or of anything else. There are likewise no new torn places. On the pillow there are signs of teeth. The quilt is stained with something which looks like beer and smells like beer. The general aspect of the bed gives grounds for thinking that a struggle took place on it."

"I know there was a struggle, without your telling me! You are not being asked about a struggle. Instead of looking for struggles, you had better——"

"Here is one top boot, but there is no sign of the other."

"Well, and what of that?"

"It proves that they strangled him, while he was taking his boots off. He hadn't time to take the second boot off when——"

"There you go!—and how do you know they strangled him?"

"There are marks of teeth on the pillow. The pillow itself is badly crumpled, and thrown a couple of yards from the bed."

"Listen to his foolishness! Better come into the garden. You would be better employed examining the garden than digging around here. I can do that without you!"

When they reached the garden they began by examining the grass. The grass under the window was crushed and trampled. A bushy burdock growing under the window close to the wall was also trampled. Dukovski succeeded in finding on it some broken twigs and a piece of cotton wool. On the upper branches were found some fine hairs of dark blue wool.

"What color was his last suit?" Dukovski asked Psyekoff.

"Yellow crash."

"Excellent! You see they wore blue!"

A few twigs of the burdock were cut off, and carefully wrapped in paper by the investigators. At this point Police Captain Artsuybasheff Svistakovski and Dr. Tyutyeff arrived. The captain bade them "Good day!" and immediately began to satisfy his curiosity. The doctor, a tall, very lean man, with dull eyes, a long nose, and a pointed chin, without greeting anyone or asking about anything, sat down on a log, sighed, and began:

"The Servians are at war again! What in heaven's name can they want now? Austria, it's all your doing!"

The examination of the window from the outside did not supply any conclusive data. The examination of the grass and the bushes nearest to the window yielded a series of useful clews. For example, Dukovski succeeded in discovering a long, dark streak, made up of spots, on the grass, which led some distance into the center of the garden. The streak ended under one of the lilac bushes in a dark brown stain. Under this same lilac bush was found a top boot, which turned out to be the fellow of the boot already found in the bedroom.

"That is a blood stain made some time ago," said Dukovski, examining the spot.

At the word "blood" the doctor rose, and going over lazily, looked at the spot.

"Yes, it is blood!" he muttered.

"That shows he wasn't strangled, if there was blood," said Chubikoff, looking sarcastically at Dukovski.

"They strangled him in the bedroom; and here, fearing he might come round again, they struck him a blow with some sharp-pointed instrument. The stain under the bush proves that he lay there a considerable time, while they were looking about for some way of carrying him out of the garden.

"Well, and how about the boot?"

"The boot confirms completely my idea that they murdered him while he was taking his boots off before going

to bed. He had already taken off one boot, and the other, this one here, he had only had time to take half off. The half-off boot came off of itself, while the body was dragged over, and fell——"

"There's a lively imagination for you!" laughed Chubikoff. "He goes on and on like that! When will you learn enough to drop your deductions? Instead of arguing and deducing, it would be much better if you took some of the blood-stained grass for analysis!"

When they had finished their examination, and drawn a plan of the locality, the investigators went to the director's office to write their report and have breakfast. While they were breakfasting they went on talking:

"The watch, the money, and so on—all untouched—" Chubikoff began, leading off the talk, "show as clearly as that two and two are four that the murder was not committed for the purpose of robbery."

"The murder was committed by an educated man!" insisted Dukovski.

"What evidence have you of that?"

"The safety match proves that to me, for the peasants hereabouts are not yet acquainted with safety matches. Only the landowners use them, and by no means all of them. And it is evident that there was not one murderer, but at least three. Two held him, while one killed him. Klausoff was strong, and the murderers must have known it!"

"What good would his strength be, supposing he was asleep?"

"The murderers came on him while he was taking off his boots. If he was taking off his boots, that proves that he wasn't asleep!"

"Stop inventing your deductions! Better eat!"

"In my opinion, your worship," said the gardener Ephraim, setting the samovar on the table, "it was nobody but Nicholas who did this dirty trick!"

"Quite possible," said Psyekoff.

"And who is Nicholas?"

"The master's valet, your worship," answered Ephraim. "Who else could it be? He's a rascal, your worship! He's a drunkard and a blackguard, the like of which Heaven should not permit! He always took the master his vodka and put the master to bed. Who else could it be? And I also venture to point out to your worship, he once boasted at the public house that he would kill the master! It happened on account of Aquilina, the woman, you know. He was making up to a soldier's widow. She pleased the master; the master made friends with her himself, and Nicholas—naturally, he was mad! He is rolling about drunk in the kitchen now. He is crying, and telling lies, saying he is sorry for the master——"

The examining magistrate ordered Nicholas to be brought. Nicholas, a lanky young fellow, with a long, freckled nose, narrow-chested, and wearing an old jacket of his master's, entered Psyekoff's room, and bowed low before the magistrate. His face was sleepy and tear-stained. He was tipsy and could hardly keep his feet.

"Where is your master?" Chubikoff asked him.

"Murdered! your worship!"

As he said this, Nicholas blinked and began to weep.

"We know he was murdered. But where is he now? Where is his body?"

"They say he was dragged out of the window and buried in the garden!"

"Hum! The results of the investigation are known in the kitchen already!—That's bad! Where were you, my good fellow, the night the master was murdered? Saturday night, that is."

Nicholas raised his head, stretched his neck, and began to think.

"I don't know, your worship," he said. "I was drunk and don't remember."

"An alibi!" whispered Dukovski, smiling, and rubbing his hands.

"So-o! And why is there blood under the master's window?"

Nicholas jerked his head up and considered.

"Hurry up!" said the Captain of Police.

"Right away! That blood doesn't amount to anything, your worship! I was cutting a chicken's throat. I was doing it quite simply, in the usual way, when all of a sudden it broke away and started to run. That is where the blood came from."

Ephraim declared that Nicholas did kill a chicken every evening, and always in some new place, but that nobody ever heard of a half-killed chicken running about the garden, though of course it wasn't impossible.

"An alibi," sneered Dukovski; "and what an asinine alibi!"

"Did you know Aquilina?"

"Yes, your worship, I know her."

"And the master cut you out with her?"

"Not at all. *He* cut me out—Mr. Psyekoff there, Ivan Mikhailovitch; and the master cut Ivan Mikhailovitch out. That is how it was."

Psyekoff grew confused and began to scratch his left eye. Dukovski looked at him attentively, noted his confusion, and started. He noticed that the director had dark blue trousers, which he had not observed before. The trousers reminded him of the dark blue threads found on the burdock. Chubikoff in his turn glanced suspiciously at Psyekoff.

"Go!" he said to Nicholas. "And now permit me to put a question to you, Mr. Psyekoff. Of course you were here last Saturday evening?"

"Yes! I had supper with Marcus Ivanovitch about ten o'clock."

"And afterwards?"

"Afterwards—afterwards— Really, I do not remember," stammered Psyekoff. "I had a good deal to drink at supper. I don't remember when or where I went to sleep. Why are you all looking at me like that, as if I was the murderer?"

"Where were you when you woke up?"

"I was in the servants' kitchen, lying behind the stove! They can all confirm it. How I got behind the stove I don't know——"

"Do not get agitated. Did you know Aquilina?"

"There's nothing extraordinary about that——"

"She first liked you and then preferred Klausoff?"

"Yes. Ephraim, give us some more mushrooms! Do you want some more tea, Eugraph Kuzmitch?"

A heavy, oppressive silence began and lasted fully five minutes. Dukoyski silently kept his piercing eyes fixed on Psyekoff's pale face. The silence was finally broken by the examining magistrate:

"We must go to the house and talk with Maria Ivanovna, the sister of the deceased. Perhaps she may be able to supply some clews."

Chubikoff and his assistant expressed their thanks for the breakfast, and went toward the house. They found Klausoff's sister, Maria Ivanovna, an old maid of forty-five, at prayer before the big case of family icons. When she saw the portfolios in her guests' hands, and their official caps, she grew pale.

"Let me begin by apologizing for disturbing, so to speak, your devotions," began the gallant Chubikoff, bowing and scraping. "We have come to you with a request. Of course, you have heard already. There is a suspicion that your dear brother, in some way or other, has been murdered. The will of God, you know. No one can escape death, neither czar nor plowman. Could you not help us with some clew, some explanation——?"

"Oh, don't ask me!" said Maria Ivanovna, growing still paler, and covering her face with her hands. "I can tell you nothing. Nothing! I beg you! I know nothing—What can I do? Oh, no! no!—not a word about my brother! If I die, I won't say anything!"

Maria Ivanovna began to weep, and left the room. The investigators looked at each other, shrugged their shoulders, and beat a retreat.

"Confound the woman!" scolded Dukovski, going out of

the house. "It is clear she knows something, and is concealing it! And the chambermaid has a queer expression too! Wait, you wretches! We'll ferret it all out!"

In the evening Chubikoff and his deputy, lit on their road by the pale moon, wended their way homeward. They sat in their carriage and thought over the results of the day. Both were tired and kept silent. Chubikoff was always unwilling to talk while traveling, and the talkative Dukovski remained silent, to fall in with the elder man's humor. But at the end of their journey the deputy could hold in no longer, and said:

"It is quite certain," he said, "that Nicholas had something to do with the matter. *Non dubitandum est!* You can see by his face what sort of a case he is! His alibi betrays him, body and bones. But it is also certain that he did not set the thing going. He was only the stupid hired tool. You agree? And the humble Psyekoff was not without some slight share in the matter. His dark blue breeches, his agitation, his lying behind the stove in terror after the murder, his alibi and—Aquilina——"

"'Grind away, Emilian; it's your week!' So, according to you, whoever knew Aquilina is the murderer! Hothead! You ought to be sucking a bottle, and not handling affairs! You were one of Aquilina's admirers yourself—does it follow that you are implicated too?"

"Aquilina was cook in your house for a month. I am saying nothing about that! The night before that Saturday I was playing cards with you, and saw you, otherwise I should be after you too! It isn't the woman that matters, old chap! It is the mean, nasty, low spirit of jealousy that matters. The retiring young man was not pleased when they got the better of him, you see! His vanity, don't you see? He wanted revenge. Then, those thick lips of his suggest passion. So there you have it: wounded self-love and passion. That is quite enough motive for a murder. We have two of them in our hands; but who is the third? Nicholas and Psyekoff held him, but who smothered him? Psyekoff is shy, timid, an all-round coward. And Nicholas

would not know how to smother with a pillow. His sort use an ax or a club. Some third person did the smothering; but who was it?"

Dukovski crammed his hat down over his eyes and pondered. He remained silent until the carriage rolled up to the magistrate's door.

"Eureka!" he said, entering the little house and throwing off his overcoat. "Eureka, Nicholas Yermolaïyevitch! The only thing I can't understand is, how it did not occur to me sooner! Do you know who the third person was?"

"Oh, for goodness sake, shut up! There is supper! Sit down to your evening meal!"

The magistrate and Dukovski sat down to supper. Dukovski poured himself out a glass of vodka, rose, drew himself up, and said, with sparkling eyes:

"Well, learn that the third person, who acted in concert with that scoundrel Psyekoff, and did the smothering, was a woman! Yes-s! I mean—the murdered man's sister, Maria Ivanovna!"

Chubikoff choked over his vodka, and fixed his eyes on Dukovski.

"You aren't—what's-its-name? Your head isn't what-do-you-call-it? You haven't a pain in it?"

"I am perfectly well! Very well, let us say that I am crazy; but how do you explain her confusion when we appeared? How do you explain her unwillingness to give us any information? Let us admit that these are trifles. Very well! All right! But remember their relations. She detested her brother. She never forgave him for living apart from his wife. She is of the Old Faith, while in her eyes he is a godless profligate. There is where the germ of her hate was hatched. They say he succeeded in making her believe that he was an angel of Satan. He even went in for spiritualism in her presence!"

"Well, what of that?"

"You don't understand? She, as a member of the Old Faith, murdered him through fanaticism. It was not only

that she was putting to death a weed, a profligate—she was freeing the world of an antichrist!—and there, in her opinion, was her service, her religious achievement! Oh, you don't know those old maids of the Old Faith. Read Dostoyevsky! And what does Lyeskoff say about them, or Petcherski? It was she, and nobody else, even if you cut me open. She smothered him! O treacherous woman! wasn't that the reason why she was kneeling before the icons, when we came in, just to take our attention away? 'Let me kneel down and pray,' she said to herself, 'and they will think I am tranquil and did not expect them!' That is the plan of all novices in crime, Nicholas Yermolaïyevitch, old pal! My dear old man, won't you intrust this business to me? Let me personally bring it through! Friend, I began it and I will finish it!"

Chubikoff shook his head and frowned.

"We know how to manage difficult matters ourselves," he said; "and your business is not to push yourself in where you don't belong. Write from dictation when you are dictated to; that is your job!"

Dukovski flared up, banged the door, and disappeared.

"Clever rascal!" muttered Chubikoff, glancing after him. "Awfully clever! But too much of a hothead. I must buy him a cigar case at the fair as a present."

The next day, early in the morning, a young man with a big head and a pursed-up mouth, who came from Klausoff's place, was introduced to the magistrate's office. He said he was the shepherd Daniel, and brought a very interesting piece of information.

"I was a bit drunk," he said. "I was with my pal till midnight. On my way home, as I was drunk, I went into the river for a bath. I was taking a bath, when I looked up. Two men were walking along the dam, carrying something black. 'Shoo!' I cried at them. They got scared, and went off like the wind toward Makareff's cabbage garden. Strike me dead, if they weren't carrying away the master!"

That same day, toward evening, Psyekoff and Nicholas

were arrested and brought under guard to the district town. In the town they were committed to the cells of the prison.

II

A FORTNIGHT passed.

It was morning. The magistrate Nicholas Yermolaïyevitch was sitting in his office before a green table, turning over the papers of the "Klausoff case"; Dukovski was striding restlessly up and down, like a wolf in a cage.

"You are convinced of the guilt of Nicholas and Psyekoff," he said, nervously plucking at his young beard. "Why will you not believe in the guilt of Maria Ivanovna? Are there not proofs enough for you?"

"I don't say I am not convinced. I am convinced, but somehow I don't believe it! There are no real proofs, but just a kind of philosophizing—fanaticism, this and that——"

"You can't do without an ax and bloodstained sheets. Those jurists! Very well, I'll prove it to you! You will stop sneering at the psychological side of the affair! To Siberia with your Maria Ivanovna! I will prove it! If philosophy is not enough for you, I have something substantial for you. It will show you how correct my philosophy is. Just give me permission——"

"What are you going on about?"

"About the safety match! Have you forgotten it? I haven't! I am going to find out who struck it in the murdered man's room. It was not Nicholas that struck it; it was not Psyekoff, for neither of them had any matches when they were examined; it was the third person, Maria Ivanovna. I will prove it to you. Just give me permission to go through the district to find out."

"That's enough! Sit down. Let us go on with the examination."

Dukovski sat down at a little table, and plunged his long nose in a bundle of papers.

"Bring in Nicholas Tetekhoff!" cried the examining magistrate.

They brought Nicholas in. Nicholas was pale and thin as a rail. He was trembling.

"Tetekhoff!" began Chubikoff. "In 1879 you were tried in the Court of the First Division, convicted of theft, and sentenced to imprisonment. In 1882 you were tried a second time for theft, and were again imprisoned. We know all——"

Astonishment was depicted on Nicholas's face. The examining magistrate's omniscience startled him. But soon his expression of astonishment changed to extreme indignation. He began to cry and requested permission to go and wash his face and quiet down. They led him away.

"Brink in Psyekoff!" ordered the examining magistrate.

They brought in Psyekoff. The young man had changed greatly during the last few days. He had grown thin and pale, and looked haggard. His eyes had an apathetic expression.

"Sit down, Psyekoff," said Chubikoff. "I hope that to-day you are going to be reasonable, and will not tell lies, as you did before. All these days you have denied that you had anything to do with the murder of Klausoff, in spite of all the proofs that testify against you. That is foolish. Confession will lighten your guilt. This is the last time I am going to talk to you. If you do not confess to-day, to-morrow it will be too late. Come, tell me all——"

"I know nothing about it. I know nothing about your proofs," answered Psyekoff, almost inaudibly.

"It's no use! Well, let me relate to you how the matter took place. On Saturday evening you were sitting in Klausoff's sleeping room, and drinking vodka and beer with him." (Dukovski fixed his eyes on Psyekoff's face, and kept them there all through the examination.) "Nicholas was waiting on you. At one o'clock, Marcus Ivanovitch announced his intention of going to bed. He always went to bed at one o'clock. When he was taking off his boots, and was giving you directions about details of management, you and Nicholas, at a given signal, seized your drunken master and threw him on the

bed. One of you sat on his legs, the other on his head. Then a third person came in from the passage—a woman in a black dress, whom you know well, and who had previously arranged with you as to her share in your criminal deed. She seized a pillow and began to smother him. While the struggle was going on the candle went out. The woman took a box of safety matches from her pocket, and lit the candle. Was it not so? I see by your face that I am speaking the truth. But to go on. After you had smothered him, and saw that he had ceased breathing, you and Nicholas pulled him out through the window and laid him down near the burdock. Fearing that he might come round again, you struck him with something sharp. Then you carried him away, and laid him down under a lilac bush for a short time. After resting awhile and considering, you carried him across the fence. Then you entered the road. After that comes the dam. Near the dam, a peasant frightened you. Well, what is the matter with you?"

"I am suffocating!" replied Psyekoff. "Very well—have it so. Only let me go out, please!"

They led Psyekoff away.

"At last! He has confessed!" cried Chubikoff, stretching himself luxuriously. "He has betrayed himself! And didn't I get round him cleverly! Regularly caught him napping——"

"And he doesn't deny the woman in the black dress!" exulted Dukovski. "But all the same, that safety match is tormenting me frightfully. I can't stand it any longer. Good-by! I am off!"

Dukovski put on his cap and drove off. Chubikoff began to examine Aquilina. Aquilina declared that she knew nothing whatever about it.

At six that evening Dukovski returned. He was more agitated than he had ever been before. His hands trembled so that he could not even unbutton his greatcoat. His cheeks glowed. It was clear that he did not come empty-handed.

"*Veni, vidi, vici!*" he cried, rushing into Chubikoff's room, and falling into an armchair. "I swear to you on my honor, I begin to believe that I am a genius! Listen, devil take us all! It is funny, and it is sad. We have caught three already—isn't that so? Well, I have found the fourth, and a woman at that. You will never believe who it is! But listen. I went to Klausoff's village, and began to make a spiral round it. I visited all the little shops, public houses, dram shops on the road, everywhere asking for safety matches. Everywhere they said they hadn't any. I made a wide round. Twenty times I lost faith, and twenty times I got it back again. I knocked about the whole day, and only an hour ago I got on the track. Three versts from here. They gave me a packet of ten boxes. One box was missing. Immediately: 'Who bought the other box?' 'Such-a-one! She was pleased with them!' Old man! Nicholas Yermolaïyevitch! See what a fellow who was expelled from the seminary and who has read Gaboriau can do! From to-day on I begin to respect myself! Oof! Well, come!"

"Come where?"

"To her, to number four! We must hurry, otherwise—otherwise I'll burst with impatience! Do you know who she is? You'll never guess! Olga Petrovna, Marcus Ivanovitch's wife—his own wife—that's who it is! She is the person who bought the matchbox!"

"You—you—you are out of your mind!"

"It's quite simple! To begin with, she smokes. Secondly, she was head and ears in love with Klausoff, even after he refused to live in the same house with her, because she was always scolding his head off. Why, they say she used to beat him because she loved him so much. And then he positively refused to stay in the same house. Love turned sour. 'Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned.' But come along! Quick, or it will be dark. Come!"

"I am not yet sufficiently crazy to go and disturb a respectable honorable woman in the middle of the night for a crazy boy!"

"Respectable, honorable! Do honorable women murder their husbands? After that you are a rag, and not an examining magistrate! I never ventured to call you names before, but now you compel me to. Rag! Dressing-gown! —Dear Nicholas Yermolaïyevitch, do come, I beg of you——!"

The magistrate made a deprecating motion with his hand.

"I beg of you! I ask, not for myself, but in the interests of justice. I beg you! I implore you! Do what I ask you to, just this once!"

Dukovski went down on his knees.

"Nicholas Yermolaïyevitch! Be kind! Call me a blackguard, a ne'er-do-weel, if I am mistaken about this woman. You see what an affair it is. What a case it is. A romance! A woman murdering her own husband for love! The fame of it will go all over Russia. They will make you investigator in all important cases. Understand, O foolish old man!"

The magistrate frowned, and undecidedly stretched his hand toward his cap.

"Oh, the devil take you!" he said. "Let us go!"

It was dark when the magistrate's carriage rolled up to the porch of the old country house in which Olga Petrovna had taken refuge with her brother.

"What pigs we are," said Chubikoff, taking hold of the bell, "to disturb a poor woman like this!"

"It's all right! It's all right! Don't get frightened! We can say that we have broken a spring."

Chubikoff and Dukovski were met at the threshold by a tall buxom woman of three and twenty, with pitch-black brows and juicy red lips. It was Olga Petrovna herself, apparently not the least distressed by the recent tragedy.

"Oh, what a pleasant surprise!" she said, smiling broadly. "You are just in time for supper. Kuzma Petrovitch is not at home. He is visiting the priest, and has stayed late. But we'll get on without him! Be seated. You have come from the examination?"

"Yes. We broke a spring, you know," began Chubikoff, entering the sitting room and sinking into an armchair.

"Take her unawares—at once!" whispered Dukovski; "take her unawares!"

"A spring—hum—yes—so we came in."

"Take her unawares, I tell you! She will guess what the matter is if you drag things out like that."

"Well, do it yourself as you want. But let me get out of it," muttered Chubikoff, rising and going to the window.

"Yes, a spring," began Dukovski, going close to Olga Petrovna and wrinkling his long nose. "We did not drive over here—to take supper with you or—to see Kuzma Petrovitch. We came here to ask you, respected madam, where Marcus Ivanovitch is, whom you murdered!"

"What? Marcus Ivanovitch murdered?" stammered Olga Petrovna, and her broad face suddenly and instantaneously flushed bright scarlet. "I don't—understand!"

"I ask you in the name of the law! Where is Klausoff? We know all!"

"Who told you?" Olga Petrovna asked in a low voice, unable to endure Dukovski's glance.

"Be so good as to show us where he is!"

"But how did you find out? Who told you?"

"We know all! I demand it in the name of the law!"

The examining magistrate, emboldened by her confusion, came forward and said:

"Show us, and we will go away. Otherwise, we——"

"What do you want with him?"

"Madam, what is the use of these questions? We ask you to show us! You tremble, you are agitated. Yes, he has been murdered, and, if you must have it, murdered by you! Your accomplices have betrayed you!"

Olga Petrovna grew pale.

"Come!" she said in a low voice, wringing her hands. "I have him—hid—in the bath house! Only for heaven's sake, do not tell Kuzma Petrovitch. I beg and implore you! He will never forgive me!"

Olga Petrovna took down a big key from the wall, and

led her guests through the kitchen and passage to the courtyard. The courtyard was in darkness. Fine rain was falling. Olga Petrovna walked in advance of them. Chubikoff and Dukovski strode behind her through the long grass, as the odor of wild hemp and dishwater splashing under their feet reached them. The courtyard was wide. Soon the dishwater ceased, and they felt freshly broken earth under their feet. In the darkness appeared the shadowy outlines of trees, and among the trees a little house with a crooked chimney.

"That is the bath house," said Olga Petrovna. "But I implore you, do not tell my brother! If you do, I'll never hear the end of it!"

Going up to the bath house, Chubikoff and Dukovski saw a huge padlock on the door.

"Get your candle and matches ready," whispered the examining magistrate to his deputy.

Olga Petrovna unfastened the padlock, and let her guests into the bath house. Dukovski struck a match and lit up the anteroom. In the middle of the anteroom stood a table. On the table, beside a sturdy little samovar, stood a soup tureen with cold cabbage soup and a plate with the remnants of some sauce.

"Forward!"

They went into the next room, where the bath was. There was a table there also. On the table was a dish with some ham, a bottle of vodka, plates, knives, forks.

"But where is it—where is the murdered man?" asked the examining magistrate.

"On the top tier," whispered Olga Petrovna, still pale and trembling.

Dukovski took the candle in his hand and climbed up to the top tier of the sweating frame. There he saw a long human body lying motionless on a large feather bed. A slight snore came from the body.

"You are making fun of us, devil take it!" cried Dukovski. "That is not the murdered man! Some live fool is lying here. Here, whoever you are, the devil take you!"

The body drew in a quick breath and stirred. Dukovski stuck his elbow into it. It raised a hand, stretched itself, and lifted its head.

"Who is sneaking in here?" asked a hoarse, heavy bass. "What do you want?"

Dukovski raised the candle to the face of the unknown, and cried out. In the red nose, disheveled, unkempt hair, the pitch-black mustaches, one of which was jauntily twisted and pointed insolently toward the ceiling, he recognized the gallant cavalryman Klausoff.

"You—Marcus—Ivanovitch? Is it possible?"

The examining magistrate glanced sharply up at him, and stood spellbound.

"Yes, it is I. That's you, Dukovski? What the devil do you want here? And who's that other mug down there? Great snakes! It is the examining magistrate! What fate has brought him here?"

Klausoff rushed down and threw his arms round Chubikoff in a cordial embrace. Olga Petrovna slipped through the door.

"How did you come here? Let's have a drink, devil take it! Tra-ta-ti-to-tum—let us drink! But who brought you here? How did you find out that I was here? But it doesn't matter! Let's have a drink!"

Klausoff lit the lamp and poured out three glasses of vodka.

"That is—I don't understand you," said the examining magistrate, running his hands over him. "Is this you or not you!"

"Oh, shut up! You want to preach me a sermon? Don't trouble yourself! Young Dukovski, empty your glass! Friends, let us bring this— What are you looking at? Drink!"

"All the same, I do not understand!" said the examining magistrate, mechanically drinking off the vodka. "What are you here for?"

"Why shouldn't I be here, if I am all right here?"

Klausoff drained his glass and took a bite of ham.

"I am in captivity here, as you see. In solitude, in a cavern, like a ghost or a bogey. Drink! She carried me off and locked me up, and—well, I am living here, in the deserted bath house, like a hermit. I am fed. Next week I think I'll try to get out. I'm tired of it here!"

"Incomprehensible!" said Dukovski.

"What is incomprehensible about it?"

"Incomprehensible! For Heaven's sake, how did your boot get into the garden?"

"What boot?"

"We found one boot in the sleeping room and the other in the garden."

"And what do you want to know that for? It's none of your business! Why don't you drink, devil take you? If you wakened me, then drink with me! It is an interesting tale, brother, that of the boot! I didn't want to go with Olga. I don't like to be bossed. She came under the window and began to abuse me. She always was a termagant. You know what women are like, all of them. I was a bit drunk, so I took a boot and heaved it at her. Ha-ha-ha! Teach her not to scold another time! But it didn't! Not a bit of it! She climbed in at the window, lit the lamp, and began to hammer poor tipsy me. She thrashed me, dragged me over here, and locked me in. She feeds me now—on love, vodka, and ham! But where are you off to, Chubikoff? Where are you going?"

The examining magistrate swore, and left the bath house. Dukovski followed him, crestfallen. They silently took their seats in the carriage and drove off. The road never seemed to them so long and disagreeable as it did that time. Both remained silent. Chubikoff trembled with rage all the way. Dukovski hid his nose in the collar of his overcoat, as if he was afraid that the darkness and the drizzling rain might read the shame in his face.

When they reached home, the examining magistrate found Dr. Tyutyeff awaiting him. The doctor was sitting at the table, and, sighing deeply, was turning over the pages of the *Neva*.

"Such goings-on there are in the world!" he said, meeting the examining magistrate with a sad smile. "Austria is at it again! And Gladstone also to some extent——"

Chubikoff threw his cap under the table, and shook himself.

"Devils' skeletons! Don't plague me! A thousand times I have told you not to bother me with your politics! This is no question of politics! And you," said Chubikoff, turning to Dukovski and shaking his fist, "I won't forget this in a thousand years!"

"But the safety match? How could I know?"

"Choke yourself with your safety match! Get out of my way! Don't make me mad, or the devil only knows what I'll do to you! Don't let me see a trace of you!"

Dukovski sighed, took his hat, and went out.

"I'll go and get drunk," he decided, going through the door, and gloomily wending his way to the public house.

Vsevolod Vladimirovitch Krestovski

Knights of Industry

I

THE LAST WILL OF THE PRINCESS

PRINCESS ANNA CHECHEVINSKI for the last time looked at the home of her girlhood, over which the St. Petersburg twilight was descending. Defying the commands of her mother, the traditions of her family, she had decided to elope with the man of her choice. With a last word of farewell to her maid, she wrapped her cloak round her and disappeared into the darkness.

The maid's fate had been a strange one. In one of the districts beyond the Volga lived a noble, a bachelor, luxuriously, caring only for his own amusement. He fished, hunted, and petted the pretty little daughter of his housekeeper, one of his serfs, whom he vaguely intended to set free. He passed hours playing with the pretty child, and even had an old French governess come to give her lessons. She taught little Natasha to dance, to play the piano, to put on the airs and graces of a little lady. So the years passed, and the old nobleman obeyed the girl's every whim, and his serfs bowed before her and kissed her hands. Gracefully and willfully she queened it over the whole household.

Then one fine day the old noble took thought and died. He had forgotten to liberate his housekeeper and her daughter, and, as he was a bachelor, his estate went to his next of kin, the elder Princess Chechevinski. Between the brother and sister a cordial hatred had existed, and they had not seen one another for years.

Coming to take possession of the estate, Princess Chechevinski carried things with a high hand. She ordered the housekeeper to the cow house, and carried off the girl Natasha, as her daughter's maid, to St. Petersburg, from the first hour letting her feel the lash of her bitter tongue and despotic will. Natasha had tried in vain to dry her mother's tears. With growing anger and sorrow she watched the old house as they drove away, and looking at the old princess she said to herself, "I hate her! I hate her! I will never forgive her!"

Princess Anna, bidding her maid good-by, disappeared into the night. The next morning the old princess learned of the flight. Already ill, she fell fainting to the floor, and for a long time her condition was critical. She regained consciousness, tried to find words to express her anger, and again swooned away. Day and night, three women watched over her, her son's old nurse, her maid, and Natasha, who took turns in waiting on her. Things continued thus for forty-eight hours. Finally, on the night of the third day she came to herself. It was Natasha's watch.

"And you knew? You knew she was going?" the old princess asked her fiercely.

The girl started, unable at first to collect her thoughts, and looked up frightened. The dim flicker of the night light lit her pale face and golden hair, and fell also on the grim, emaciated face of the old princess, whose eyes glittered feverishly under her thick brows.

"You knew my daughter was going to run away?" repeated the old woman, fixing her keen eyes on Natasha's face, trying to raise herself from among the lace-fringed pillows.

"I knew," the girl answered in a half whisper, lowering her eyes in confusion, and trying to throw off her first impression of terror.

"Why did you not tell me before?" the old woman continued, even more fiercely.

Natasha had now recovered her composure, and rais-

ing her eyes with an expression of innocent distress, she answered:

"Princess Anna hid everything from me also, until the very last. How dare I tell you? Would you have believed me? It was not my business, your excellency!"

The old princess shook her head, smiling bitterly and incredulously.

"Snake!" she hissed fiercely, looking at the girl; and then she added quickly:

"Did any of the others know?"

"No one but myself!" answered Natasha.

"Never dare to speak of her again! Never dare!" cried the old princess, and once more she sank back unconscious on the pillows.

About noon the next day she again came to herself, and ordered her son to be called. He came in quietly, and affectionately approached his mother.

The princess dismissed her maid, and remained alone with her son.

"You have no longer a sister!" she cried, turning to her son, with the nervous spasm which returned each time she spoke of her daughter. "She is dead for us! She has disgraced us! I curse her! You, you alone are my heir!"

At these words the young prince pricked up his ears and bent even more attentively toward his mother. The news of his sole heirship was so pleasant and unexpected that he did not even think of asking how his sister had disgraced them, and only said with a deep sigh:

"Oh, mamma, she was always opposed to you. She never loved you!"

"I shall make a will in your favor," continued the princess, telling him as briefly as possible of Princess Anna's flight. "Yes, in your favor—only on one condition: that you will never recognize your sister. That is my last wish!"

"Your wish is sacred to me," murmured her son, tenderly kissing her hand. He had always been jealous and

envious of his sister, and was besides in immediate need of money.

The princess signed her will that same day, to the no small satisfaction of her dear son, who, in his heart, was wondering how soon his beloved parent would pass away, so that he might get his eyes on her long-hoarded wealth.

II

THE LITHOGRAPHER'S APPRENTICE

LATER on the same day, in a little narrow chamber of one of the huge, dirty tenements on Vosnesenski Prospekt, sat a young man of ruddy complexion. He was sitting at a table, bending toward the one dusty window, and attentively examining a white twenty-five ruble note.

The room, dusty and dark, was wretched enough. Two rickety chairs, a torn haircloth sofa, with a greasy pillow, and the bare table at the window, were its entire furniture. Several scattered lithographs, two or three engravings, two slabs of lithographer's stone on the table, and engraver's tools sufficiently showed the occupation of the young man. He was florid, with red hair; of Polish descent, and his name was Kasimir Bodlevski. On the wall, over the sofa, between the overcoat and the cloak hanging on the wall, was a pencil drawing of a young girl. It was the portrait of Natasha.

The young man was so absorbed in his examination of the twenty-five ruble note that when a gentle knock sounded on the door he started nervously, as if coming back to himself, and even grew pale, and hurriedly crushed the banknote into his pocket.

The knock was repeated—and this time Bodlevski's face lit up. It was evidently a well-known and expected knock, for he sprang up and opened the door with a welcoming smile.

Natasha entered the room.

"What were you dreaming about that you didn't open the door for me?" she asked caressingly, throwing aside her hat and cloak, and taking a seat on the tumble-down sofa. "What were you busy at?"

"You know, yourself."

And instead of explaining further, he drew the bank-note from his pocket and showed it to Natasha.

"This morning the master paid me, and I am keeping the money," he continued in a low voice, tilting back his chair. "I pay neither for my rooms nor my shop, but sit here and study all the time."

"It's so well worth while, isn't it?" smiled Natasha with a contemptuous grimace.

"You don't think it is worth while?" said the young man. "Wait! I'll learn. We'll be rich!"

"Yes, if we aren't sent to Siberia!" the girl laughed. "What kind of wealth is that?" she went on. "The game is not worth the candle. I'll be rich before you are."

"All right, go ahead!"

"Go ahead? I didn't come to talk nonsense, I came on business. You help me, and, on my word of honor, we'll be in clover!"

Bodlevski looked at his companion in astonishment.

"I told you my Princess Anna was going to run away. She's gone! And her mother has cut her off from the inheritance," Natasha continued with an exultant smile. "I looked through the scrap basket, and have brought some papers with me."

"What sort of papers?"

"Oh, letters and notes. They are all in Princess Anna's handwriting. Shall I give them to you?" jested Natasha. "Have a good look at them, examine them, learn her handwriting, so that you can imitate every letter. That kind of thing is just in your line; you are a first-class copyist, so this is just the job for you."

The engraver listened, and only shrugged his shoulders.

"No, joking aside," she continued seriously, drawing nearer Bodlevski, "I have thought of something out of the

common; you will be grateful. I have no time to explain it all now. You will know later on. The main thing is—learn her handwriting."

"But what is it all for?" said Bodlevski wonderingly.

"So that you may be able to write a few words in the handwriting of Princess Anna; what you have to write I'll dictate to you."

"And then?"

"Then hurry up and get me a passport in some one else's name, and have your own ready. But learn her handwriting. Everything depends on that!"

"It won't be easy. I'll hardly be able to!" muttered Bodlevski, scratching his head.

Natasha flared up.

"You say you love me?" she cried energetically, with a glance of anger. "Well, then, do it. Unless you are telling lies, you can learn to do banknotes."

The young man strode up and down his den, perplexed.

"How soon do you want it?" he asked, after a minute's thought. "In a couple of days?"

"Yes, in about two days, not longer, or the whole thing is done for!" the girl replied decisively. "In two days I'll come for the writing, and be sure my passport is ready!"

"Very well. I'll do it," consented Bodlevski. And Natasha began to dictate to him the wording of the letter.

As soon as she was gone the engraver got to work. All the evening and a great part of the night he bent over the papers she had brought, examining the handwriting, studying the letters, and practicing every stroke with the utmost care, copying and repeating it a hundred times, until at last he had reached the required clearness. At last he mastered the writing. It only remained to give it the needed lightness and naturalness. His head rang from the concentration of blood in his temples, but he still worked on.

Finally, when it was almost morning, the note was written, and the name of Princess Anna was signed to it. The

work was a masterpiece, and even exceeded Bodlevski's expectations. Its lightness and clearness were remarkable. The engraver, examining the writing of Princess Anna, compared it with his own work, and was astonished, so perfect was the resemblance.

And long he admired his handiwork, with the parental pride known to every creator, and as he looked at this note he for the first time fully realized that he was an artist.

III

THE CAVE

"HALF the work is done!" he cried, jumping from the tumble-down sofa. "But the passport? There's where the shoe pinches," continued the engraver, remembering the second half of Natasha's commission. "The passport—yes—that's where the shoe pinches!" he muttered to himself in perplexity, resting his head on his hands and his elbows on his knees. Thinking over all kinds of possible and impossible plans, he suddenly remembered a fellow countryman of his, a shoemaker named Yuzitch, who had once confessed in a moment of intoxication that "he would rather hook a watch than patch a shoe." Bodlevski remembered that three months before he had met Yuzitch in the street, and they had gone together to a wine shop, where, over a bottle generously ordered by Yuzitch, Bodlevski had lamented over the hardships of mankind in general, and his own in particular. He had not taken advantage of Yuzitch's offer to introduce him to "the gang," only because he had already determined to take up one of the higher branches of the "profession," namely, to metamorphose white paper into banknotes. When they were parting, Yuzitch had warmly wrung his hand, saying:

"Whenever you want anything, dear friend, or if you just want to see me, come to the Cave; come to Razyeziy Street and ask for the Cave, and at the Cave anyone will

show you where to find Yuzitch. If the barkeeper makes difficulties just whisper to him that 'Secret' sent you, and he'll show you at once."

As this memory suddenly flashed into his mind, Bodlevski caught up his hat and coat and hurried downstairs into the street. Making his way through the narrow, dirty streets to the Five Points, he stopped perplexed. Happily he noticed a sleepy watchman leaning leisurely against a wall, and going up to him he said:

"Tell me, where is the Cave?"

"The what?" asked the watchman impatiently.

"The Cave."

"The Cave? There is no such place!" he replied, looking suspiciously at Bodlevski.

Bodlevski put his hand in his pocket and pulled out some small change: "If you tell me——"

The watchman brightened up. "Why didn't you say so before?" he asked, grinning. "You see that house, the second from the corner? The wooden one? That's the Cave."

Bodlevski crossed the street in the direction indicated, and looked for the sign over the door. To his astonishment he did not find it and only later he knew that the name was strictly "unofficial," only used by members of "the gang."

Opening the door cautiously, Bodlevski made his way into the low, dirty barroom. Behind the bar stood a tall, handsome man with an open countenance and a bald head. Politely bowing to Bodlevski, with his eyes rather than his head, he invited him to enter the inner room. But Bodlevski explained that he wanted, not the inner room, but his friend Yuzitch.

"Yuzitch?" said the barkeeper thoughtfully. "We don't know anyone of that name."

"Why, he's here all the time," cried Bodlevski, in astonishment.

"Don't know him," retorted the barkeeper imperturbably.

"'Secret' sent me!" Bodlevski suddenly exclaimed, without lowering his voice.

The barkeeper looked at him sharply and suspiciously, and then asked, with a smile:

"Who did you say?"

"'Secret,'" repeated Bodlevski.

After a while the barkeeper said, "And did your—friend make an appointment?"

"Yes, an appointment!" Bodlevski replied, beginning to lose patience.

"Well, take a seat in the inner room," again said the barkeeper slyly. "Perhaps your friend will come in, or perhaps he is there already."

Bodlevski made his way into a roomy saloon, with five windows with faded red curtains. The ceiling was black from the smoke of hanging lamps; little square tables were dotted about the floor; their covers were coarse and not above reproach on the score of cleanliness. The air was pungent with the odor of cheap tobacco and cheaper cigars. On the walls were faded oleographs of generals and archbishops, flyblown and stained.

Bodlevski, little as he was used to refined surroundings, found his gorge rising. At some of the little tables furtive, impudent, tattered, sleek men were drinking.

Presently Yuzitch made his appearance from a low door at the other end of the room. The meeting of the two friends was cordial, especially on Bodlevski's side. Presently they were seated at a table, with a flask of wine between them, and Bodlevski began to explain what he wanted to his friend.

As soon as he heard what was wanted, Yuzitch took on an air of importance, knit his brows, hemmed, and hawed.

"I can manage it," he said finally. "Yes, we can manage it. I must see one of my friends about it. But it's difficult. It will cost money."

Bodlevski immediately assented. Yuzitch at once rose and went over to a red-nosed individual in undress uniform, who was poring over the *Police News*.

"Friend Borisovitch," said Yuzitch, holding out his hand to him, "something doing!"

"Fair or foul?" asked the man with the red nose.

"Hang your cheek!" laughed Yuzitch; "if I say it, of course it's fair." After a whispered conference, Yuzitch returned to Bodlevski and told him that it was all right; that the passport for Natasha would be ready by the next evening. Bodlevski paid him something in advance and went home triumphantly.

At eleven o'clock the next evening Bodlevski once more entered the large room at the Cave, now all lit up and full of an animated crowd of men and women, all with the same furtive, predatory faces. Bodlevski felt nervous. He had no fears while turning white paper into banknotes in the seclusion of his own workshop, but he was full of apprehensions concerning his present guest, because several people had to be let into the secret.

Yuzitch presently appeared through the same low door and, coming up to Bodlevski, explained that the passport would cost twenty rubles. Bodlevski paid the money over in advance, and Yuzitch led him into a back room. On the table burned a tallow candle, which hardly lit up the faces of seven people who were grouped round it, one of them being the red-nosed man who was reading the *Police News*. The seven men were all from the districts of Vilna and Vitebsk, and were specialists in the art of fabricating passports.

The red-nosed man approached Bodlevski: "We must get acquainted with each other," he said amiably. "I have the honor to present myself!" and he bowed low; "Former District Secretary Pacomius Borisovitch Prakkin. Let me request you first of all to order some vodka; my hand shakes, you know," he added apologetically. "I don't want it so much for myself as for my hand—to steady it."

Bodlevski gave him some change, which the red-nosed man put in his pocket and at once went to the sideboard for a flask of vodka which he had already bought. "Let

us give thanks! And now to business!" he said, smacking his lips after a glass of vodka.

A big, red-haired man, one of the group of seven, drew from his pocket two vials. In one was a sticky black fluid; in the other, something as clear as water.

"We are chemists, you see," the red-nosed man explained to Bodlevski with a grin, and then added:

"Finch! on guard!"

A young man, who had been lolling on a couch in the corner, rose and took up a position outside the door.

"Now, brothers, close up!" cried the red-nosed man, and all stood in close order, elbow to elbow, round the table. "And now we take a newspaper and have it handy on the table! That is in case," he explained to Bodlevski, "any outsider happened in on us—which Heaven prevent! We aren't up to anything at all; simply reading the political news! You catch on?"

"How could I help catching on?"

"Very well. And now let us make everything as clear as in a looking-glass. What class do you wish to make the person belong to? The commercial or the nobility?"

"I think the nobility would be best," said Bodlevski.

"Certainly! At least that will give the right of free passage through all the towns and districts of the Russian Empire. Let us see. Have we not something that will suit?"

And Pacomius Borisovitch, opening his portfolio, filled with all kinds of passports, certificates, and papers of identification, began to turn them over, but without taking any out of the portfolio. All with the same thought—that some stranger might come in.

"Ha! here's a new one! Where did it come from?" he cried.

"I got it out of a new arrival," muttered the red-headed man.

"Well done! Just what we want! And a noble's passport, too! It is evident that Heaven is helping us. See what a blessing brings!

"'This passport is issued by the District of Yaroslav,'" he continued reading, "'to the college assessor's widow, Maria Solontseva, with permission to travel,'" and so on in due form. "Did you get it here?" he added, turning to the red-headed man.

"Came from Moscow!"

"Pinched?"

"Knocked on the head!" briefly replied the red-headed man.

"Knocked on the head?" repeated Pacomius Borisovitch. "Serious business. Comes under sections 332 and 727 of the Penal Code."

"Driveling again!" cried the red-headed man. "I'll teach you to talk about the Penal Code!" and rising deliberately, he dealt Pacomius Borisovitch a well-directed blow on the head, which sent him rolling into the corner. Pacomius picked himself up, blinking with indignation.

"What is the meaning of such conduct?" he asked loftily.

"It means," said the red-headed man, "that if you mention the Penal Code again I'll knock your head off!"

"Brothers, brothers!" cried Yuzitch in a good-humored tone; "we are losing precious time! Forgive him!" he added, turning to Pacomius. "You must forgive him!"

"I—forgive him," answered Pacomius, but the light in his eye showed that he was deeply offended.

"Well," he went on, addressing Bodlevski, "will it suit you to have the person pass as Maria Solontseva, widow of a college assessor?"

IV

THE CAPTAIN OF THE GOLDEN BAND

Bodlevski had not time to nod his head in assent, when suddenly the outer door was pushed quickly open and a tall man, well built and fair-haired, stepped swiftly into

the room. He wore a military uniform and gold-rimmed eyeglasses.

The company turned their faces toward him in startled surprise, but no one moved. All continued to stand in close order round the table.

"Health to you, eaglets! honorable men of Vilna! What are you up to? What are you busy at?" cried the newcomer, swiftly approaching the table and taking the chair that Pacomius Borisovitch had just been knocked out of.

"What is all this?" he continued, with one hand seizing the vial of colorless liquid and with the other the photograph of the college assessor's widow. "So this is hydrochloric acid for erasing ink? Very good! And this is a photo! So we are fabricating passports? Very fine! Business is business! Hey! Witnesses!"

And the fair-haired man whistled sharply. From the outer door appeared two faces, set on shoulders of formidable proportions.

The red-headed man silently went up to the newcomer and fiercely seized him by the collar. At the same moment the rest seized chairs or logs or bars to defend themselves.

The fair-haired man meanwhile, not in the least changing his expression of cool self-confidence, quickly slipped his hands into his pockets and pulled out a pair of small double-barreled pistols. In the profound silence in which this scene took place they could distinctly hear the click of the hammers as he cocked them. He raised his right hand and pointed the muzzle at the breast of his opponent.

The red-headed man let go his collar, and glancing contemptuously at him, with an expression of hate and wrath, silently stepped aside.

"How much must we pay?" he asked sullenly.

"Oho! that's better. You should have begun by asking that!" answered the newcomer, settling himself comfortably on his chair and toying with his pistols. "How much do you earn?"

"We get little enough! Just five rubles," answered the red-headed man.

"That's too little. I need a great deal more. But you are lying, brother! You would not stir for less than twenty rubles!"

"Thanks for the compliment!" interrupted Pacomius Borisovitch.

The fair-haired man nodded to him satirically. "I need a lot more," he repeated firmly and impressively; "and if you don't give me at least twenty-five rubles I'll denounce you this very minute to the police—and you see I have my witnesses ready."

"Sergei Antonitch! Mr. Kovroff! Have mercy on us! Where can we get so much from? I tell you as in the presence of the Creator! There are ten of us, as you see. And there are three of you. And I, Yuzitch, and Gretcka deserve double shares!" added Pacomius Borisovitch persuasively.

"Gretcka deserves nothing at all for catching me by the throat," decided Sergei Antonitch Kovroff.

"Mr. Kovroff!" began Pacomius again. "You and I are gentlemen——"

"What! What did you say?" Kovroff contemptuously interrupted him. "You put yourself on my level? Ha! ha! ha! No, brother; I am still in the Czar's service and wear my honor with my uniform! I, brother, have never stained myself with theft or crime, Heaven be praised. But what are you?"

"Hm! And the Golden Band? Who is its captain?" muttered Gretcka angrily, half to himself.

"Who is its captain? I am—I, Lieutenant Sergei Antonitch Kovroff, of the Chernovarski Dragoons! Do you hear? I am captain of the Golden Band," he said proudly and haughtily, scrutinizing the company with his confident gaze. "And you haven't yet got as far as the Golden Band, because you are *cowards*! Chuproff," he cried to one of his men, "go and take the mask off Finch, or the poor boy will suffocate, and untie his arms—and give him

a good crack on the head to teach him to keep watch better."

The "mask" that Kovroff employed on such occasions was nothing but a piece of oilcloth cut the size of a person's face, and smeared on one side with a thick paste. Kovroff's "boys" employed this "instrument" with wonderful dexterity; one of them generally stole up behind the unconscious victim and skillfully slapped the mask in his face; the victim at once became dumb and blind, and panted from lack of breath; at the same time, if necessary, his hands were tied behind him and he was leisurely robbed, or held, as the case might be.

The Golden Band was formed in the middle of the thirties, when the first Nicholas had been about ten years on the throne. Its first founders were three Polish nobles. It was never distinguished by the number of its members, but everyone of them could honestly call himself an accomplished knave, never stopping at anything that stood in the way of a "job." The present head of the band was Lieutenant Kovroff, who was a thorough-paced rascal, in the full sense of the word. Daring, brave, self-confident, he also possessed a handsome presence, good manners, and the worldly finish known as education. Before the members of the Golden Band, and especially before Kovroff, the small rascals stood in fear and trembling. He had his secret agents everywhere, following every move of the crooks quietly but pertinaciously. At the moment when some big job was being pulled off, Kovroff suddenly appeared unexpectedly, with some of his "boys," and demanded a contribution, threatening instantly to inform the police if he did not get it—and the rogues, in order to "keep him quiet," had to give him whatever share of their plunder he graciously deigned to indicate. Acting with extraordinary skill and acumen in all his undertakings he always managed so that not a shadow of suspicion could fall on himself and so he got a double share of the plunder: robbing the honest folk and the rogues at the same time. Kovroff escaped the contempt of the

crooks because he did things on such a big scale and embarked with his Golden Band on the most desperate and dangerous enterprises that the rest of roguedom did not even dare to consider.

The rogues, whatever their rank, have a great respect for daring, skill, and force—and therefore they respected Kovroff, at the same time fearing and detesting him.

"Who are you getting that passport for?" he asked, calmly taking the paper from the table and slipping it into his pocket. Gretcka nodded toward Bodlevski.

"Aha! for you, is it? Very glad to hear it!" said Kovroff, measuring him with his eyes. "And so, gentlemen, twenty-five rubles, or good-by—to our happy meeting in the police court!"

"Mr. Kovroff! Allow me to speak to you as a man of honor!" Pacomius Borisovitch again interrupted. "We are only getting twenty rubles for the job. The whole gang will pledge their words of honor to that. Do you think we would lie to you and stain the honor of the gang for twenty measly rubles?"

"That is business. That was well said. I love a good speech, and am always ready to respect it," remarked Sergei Antonitch approvingly.

"Very well, then, see for yourself," went on the red-nosed Pacomius, "see for yourself. If we give you everything, we are doing our work and not getting a kopeck!"

"Let him pay," answered Kovroff, turning his eyes toward Bodlevski.

Bodlevski took out his gold watch, his only inheritance from his father, and laid it down on the table before Kovroff, with the five rubles that remained.

Kovroff again measured him with his eyes and smiled.

"You are a worthy young man!" he said. "Give me your hand! I see that you will go far."

And he warmly pressed the engraver's hand. "But you must know for the future," he added in a friendly but impressive way, "that I never take anything but money when I am dealing with these fellows. Ho, you!" he went

on, turning to the company, "some one go to uncle's and get cash for this watch; tell him to pay conscientiously at least two thirds of what it is worth; it is a good watch. It would cost sixty rubles to buy. And have a bottle of champagne got ready for me at the bar, quick! And if you don't, it will be the worse for you!" he called after the departing Yuzitch, who came back a few minutes later, and gave Kovroff forty rubles. Kovroff counted them, and put twenty in his pocket, returning the remainder in silence, but with a gentlemanly smile, to Bodlevski.

"Fair exchange is no robbery," he said, giving Bodlevski the passport of the college assessor's widow. "Now that old rascal Pacomius may get to work."

"What is there to do?" laughed Pacomius; "the passport will do very well. So let us have a little glass, and then a little game of cards."

"We are going to know each other better; I like your face, so I hope we shall make friends," said Kovroff, again shaking hands with Bodlevski. "Now let us go and have some wine. You will tell me over our glasses what you want the passport for, and on account of your frankness about the watch, I am well disposed to you. Lieutenant Sergei Kovroff gives you his word of honor on that. I also can be magnanimous," he concluded, and the new friends accompanied by the whole gang went out to the large hall.

There began a scene of revelry that lasted till long after midnight. Bodlevski, feeling his side pocket to see if the passport was still there, at last left the hall, bewildered, as though under a spell. He felt a kind of gloomy satisfaction; he was possessed by this satisfaction, by the uncertainty of what Natasha could have thought out, by the question how it would all turn out, and by the conviction that his first crime had already been committed. All these feelings lay like lead on his heart, while in his ears resounded the wild songs of the Cave.

V

THE KEYS OF THE OLD PRINCESS

It was nine o'clock in the evening. Natasha lit the night lamp in the bedroom of the old Princess Chechevinski, and went silently into the dressing room to prepare the soothing powders which the doctors had prescribed for her, before going to sleep.

The old princess was still very weak. Although her periods of unconsciousness had not returned, she was still subject to paroxysms of hysteria. At times she sank into forgetfulness, then started nervously, sometimes trembling in every limb. The thought of the blow of her daughter's flight never left her for a moment.

Natasha had just taken the place of the day nurse. It was her turn to wait on the patient until midnight. Silence always reigned in the house of the princess, and now that she was ill the silence was intensified tenfold. Everyone walked on tiptoe, and spoke in whispers, afraid even of coughing or of clinking a teaspoon on the sideboard. The doorbells were tied in towels, and the whole street in front of the house was thickly strewn with straw. At ten the household was already dispersed, and preparing for sleep. Only the nurse sat silently at the head of the old lady's bed.

Pouring out half a glass of water, Natasha sprinkled the powder in it, and took from the medicine chest a phial with a yellowish liquid. It was chloral. Looking carefully round, she slowly brought the lip of the phial down to the edge of the glass and let ten drops fall into it. "That will be enough," she said to herself, and smiled. Her face, as always, was coldly quiet, and not the slightest shade of any feeling was visible on it at that moment.

Natasha propped the old lady up with her arm. She drank the medicine given to her and lay down again, and in a few minutes the chloral began to have its effect. With

an occasional convulsive movement of her lower lip, she sank into a deep and heavy sleep. Natasha watched her face following the symptoms of unconsciousness, and when she was convinced that sleep had finally taken complete possession of her, and that for several hours the old woman was deprived of the power to hear anything or to wake up, she slowly moved her chair nearer the bedstead, and without taking her quietly observant eyes from the old woman's face, softly slipped her hand under the lower pillow. Moving forward with the utmost care, not more than an inch or so at a time, her hand stopped instantly, as soon as there was the slightest nervous movement of the old woman's face, on which Natasha's eyes were fixed immovably. But the old woman slept profoundly, and the hand again moved forward half an inch or so under the pillow. About half an hour passed, and the girl's eyes were still fastened on the sleeping face, and her hand was still slipping forward under the pillow, moving occasionally a little to one side, and feeling about for something. Natasha's expression was in the highest degree quiet and concentrated, but under this quietness was at the same time concealed something else, which gave the impression that if —which Heaven forbid!—the old woman should at that moment awake, the other free hand would instantly seize her by the throat.

At last the finger-ends felt something hard. "That is it!" thought Natasha, and she held her breath. In a moment, seizing its treasure, her hand began quietly to withdraw. Ten minutes more passed, and Natasha finally drew out a little bag of various colored silks, in which the old princess always kept her keys, and from which she never parted, carrying it by day in her pocket, and by night keeping it under her pillow. One of the keys was an ordinary one, that of her wardrobe. The other was smaller and finely made; it was the key of her strong box.

About an hour later, the same keys, in the same order, and with the same precautions, found their way back to their accustomed place under the old lady's pillow.

Natasha carefully wiped the glass with her handkerchief, in order that not the least odor of chloral might remain in it, and with her usual stillness sat out the remaining hours of her watch.

VI

REVENGED

The old princess awoke at one o'clock the next day. The doctor was very pleased at her long and sound sleep, the like of which the old lady had not enjoyed since her first collapse, and which, in his view, was certain to presage a turn for the better.

The princess had long ago formed a habit of looking over her financial documents, and verifying the accounts of income and expenditure. This deep-seated habit, which had become a second nature, did not leave her, now she was ill; at any rate, every morning, as soon as consciousness and tranquillity returned to her, she took out the key of her wardrobe, ordered the strong box to be brought to her, and, sending the day nurse out of the room, gave herself up in solitude to her beloved occupation, which had by this time become something like a childish amusement. She drew out her bank securities, signed and unsigned, now admiring the colored engravings on them, now sorting and rearranging them, fingering the packets to feel their thickness, counting them over, and several thousands in banknotes, kept in the house in case of need, and finally carefully replaced them in the strong box. The girl, recalled to the bedroom by the sound of the bell, restored the strong box to its former place, and the old princess, after this amusement, felt herself for some time quiet and happy.

The nurses had had the opportunity to get pretty well used to this foible; so that the daily examination of the strong box seemed to them a part of the order of things, something consecrated by custom.

After taking her medicine, and having her hands and face wiped with a towel moistened with toilet water, the princess ordered certain prayers to be read out to her, or the chapter of the Gospel appointed for the day, and then received her son. From the time of her illness—that is, from the day when she signed the will making him her sole heir—he had laid it on himself as a not altogether pleasant duty to put in an appearance for five minutes in his mother's room, where he showed himself a dutiful son by never mentioning his sister, but asking tenderly after his mother's health, and finally, with a deep sigh, gently kissing her hand, taking his departure forthwith, to sup with some actress or to meet his companions in a wine shop.

When he soon went away, the old lady, as was her habit, ordered her strong box to be brought, and sent the nurse out of the room. It was a very handsome box of ebony, with beautiful inlaid work.

The key clicked in the lock, the spring lid sprang up, and the eyes of the old princess became set in their sockets, full of bewilderment and terror. Twenty-four thousand rubles in bills, which she herself with her own hands had yesterday laid on the top of the other securities, were no longer in the strong box. All the unsigned bank securities were also gone. The securities in the name of her daughter Anna had likewise disappeared. There remained only the signed securities in the name of the old princess and her son, and a few shares of stock. In the place of all that was gone, there lay a note directed "to Princess Chechevinski."

The old lady's fingers trembled so that for a long time she could not unfold this paper. Her staring eyes wandered hither and thither as if she had lost her senses. At last she managed somehow to unfold the note, and began to read:

"You cursed me, forced me to flee, and unjustly deprived me of my inheritance. I am taking my money by

force. You may inform the police, but when you read this note, I myself and he who carried out this act by my directions, will have left St. Petersburg forever.

"Your daughter,

"Princess Anna Chechevinski."

The old lady's hands did not fall at her sides, but shifted about on her lap as if they did not belong to her. Her wandering, senseless eyes stopped their movements, and in them suddenly appeared an expression of deep meaning. The old princess made a terrible, superhuman effort to recover her presence of mind and regain command over herself. A single faint groan broke from her breast, and her teeth chattered. She began to look about the room for a light, but the lamp had been extinguished; the dull gray daylight filtering through the Venetian blinds sufficiently lit the room. Then the old lady, with a strange, irregular movement, crushed the note together in her hand, placed it in her mouth, and with a convulsive movement of her jaws chewed it, trying to swallow it as quickly as possible.

A minute passed, and the note had disappeared. The old princess closed the strong box and rang for the day nurse. Giving her the usual order in a quiet voice, she had still strength enough to support herself on her elbow and watch the nurse closing the wardrobe, and then to put the little bag with the keys back under her pillow, in its accustomed place. Then she again ordered the nurse to go.

When, two hours later, the doctor, coming for the third time, wished to see his patient and entered her bedroom, he found only the old woman's lifeless body. The blow had been too much—the daughter of the ancient and ever honorable line of Chechevinski a fugitive and a thief!

Natasha had had her revenge.

VII

BEYOND THE FRONTIER

On the morning of that same day, at nine o'clock, a well-dressed lady presented at the Bank of Commerce a number of unsigned bank shares. At the same time a young man, also elegantly dressed, presented a series of signed shares, made out in the name of "Princess Anna Chechevinski." They were properly indorsed, the signature corresponding to that in the bank books.

After a short interval the cashier of the bank paid over to the well-dressed lady a hundred and fifty thousand rubles in bills, and to the elegantly dressed young man seventy thousand rubles. The lady signed her receipt in French, Teresa Doré; the young man signed his name, Ivan Afonasieff, son of a merchant of Kostroma.

A little later on the same day—namely, about two o'clock—a light carriage carried two passengers along the Pargoloff road: a quietly dressed young woman and a quietly dressed young man. Toward evening these same young people were traveling in a Finnish coach by the stony mountain road in the direction of Abo.

Four days later the old Princesss Chechevinski was buried in the Nevski monastery.

On his return from the monastery, young Prince Chechevinski went straight for the strong box, which he had hitherto seen only at a distance, and even then only rarely. He expected to find a great deal more money in it than he found—some hundred and fifty thousand rubles; a hundred thousand in his late mother's name, and fifty thousand in his own. This was the personal property of the old princess, a part of her dowry. The young prince made a wry face—the money might last him two or three years, not more. During the lifetime of the old princess no one had known accurately how much she possessed, so that it never even entered the young prince's head to ask whether

she had not had more. He was so unmethodical that he never even looked into her account book, deciding that it was uninteresting and not worth while.

That same day the janitor of one of the huge, dirty tenements in Vosnesenski Prospekt brought to the police office notice of the fact that the Pole, Kasimir Bodlevski, had left the city; and the housekeeper of the late Princess Chechevinski informed the police that the serf girl Natalia Pavlovna (Natasha) had disappeared without leaving a trace, which the housekeeper now announced, as the three days' limit had elapsed.

At that same hour the little ship of a certain Finnish captain was gliding down the Gulf of Bothnia. The Finn stood at the helm and his young son handled the sails. On the deck sat a young man and a young woman. The young woman carried, in a little bag hung round her neck, two hundred and forty-four thousand rubles in bills, and she and her companion carried pistols in their pockets for use in case of need. Their passports declared that the young woman belonged to the noble class, and was the widow of a college assessor, her name being Maria Solontseva, while the young man was a Pole, Kasimir Bodlevski.

The little ship was crossing the Gulf of Bothnia toward the coast of Sweden.

VIII

BACK TO RUSSIA

In the year 1858, in the month of September, the "Report of the St. Petersburg City Police" among the names of "Arrivals" included the following:

Baroness von Döring, Hanoverian subject.
Ian Vladislav Karozitch, Austrian subject.

The persons above described might have been recognized among the fashionable crowds which thronged the St. Pe-

tersburg terminus of the Warsaw railway a few days before: A lady who looked not more than thirty, though she was really thirty-eight, dressed with simple elegance, tall and slender, admirably developed, with beautifully clear complexion, piercing, intelligent gray eyes, under finely outlined brows, thick chestnut hair, and a firm mouth—almost a beauty, and with an expression of power, subtlety and decision. "She is either a queen or a criminal," a physiognomist would have said after observing her face. A gentleman with a red beard, whom the lady addressed as "brother," not less elegantly dressed, and with the same expression of subtlety and decision. They left the station in a hired carriage, and drove to Demuth's Hotel.

Before narrating the adventures of these distinguished persons, let us go back twenty years, and ask what became of Natasha and Bodlevski. When last we saw them the ship that carried them away from Russia was gliding across the Gulf of Bothnia toward the Swedish coast. Late in the evening it slipped into the port of Stockholm, and the worthy Finn, winding in and out among the heavy hulls in the harbor—he was well used to the job—landed his passengers on the wharf at a lonely spot near a lonely inn, where the customs officers rarely showed their noses. Bodlevski, who had beforehand got ready the very modest sum to pay for their passage, with pitiable looks and gestures and the few Russian phrases the good Finn could understand, assured him that he was a very poor man, and could not even pay the sum agreed on in full. The deficit was inconsiderable, some two rubles in all, and the good Finn was magnanimous; he slapped his passenger on the shoulder, called him a "good comrade," declared that he would not press a poor man, and would always be ready to do him a service. He even found quarters for Bodlevski and Natasha in the inn, under his protection. The Finn was indeed a very honest smuggler. On the next morning, bidding a final farewell to their nautical friend, our couple made their way to the office of the British Consul, and asked

for an opportunity to speak with him. At this point Natasha played the principal rôle.

"My husband is a Pole," said the handsome girl, taking a seat opposite the consul in his private office, "and I myself am Russian on the father's side, but my mother was English. My husband is involved in a political enterprise; he was liable to transportation to Siberia, but a chance made it possible for us to escape while the police were on their way to arrest him. We are now political fugitives, and we intrust our lives to the protection of English law. Be generous, protect us, and send us to England!"

The ruse, skillfully planned and admirably presented, was completely successful, and two or three days later the first passenger ship under the English flag carried the happy couple to London.

Bodlevski destroyed his own passport and that of the college assessor's widow, Maria Solontseva, which Natasha had needed as a precaution while still on Russian soil. When they got to England, it would be much handier to take new names. But with their new position and these new names a great difficulty presented itself: they could find no suitable outlet for their capital without arousing very dangerous suspicions. The many-sided art of the London rogues is known to all the world; in their club, Bodlevski, who had lost no time in making certain pleasant and indispensable acquaintances there, soon succeeded in getting for himself and Natasha admirably counterfeited new passports, once more with new names and occupations. With these, in a short time, they found their way to the Continent. They both felt the full force of youth and a passionate desire to live and enjoy life; in their hot heads hummed many a golden hope and plan; they wished, to begin with, to invest their main capital somewhere, and then to travel over Europe, and to choose a quiet corner somewhere where they could settle down to a happy life.

Perhaps all this might have happened if it had not been for cards and roulette and the perpetual desire of increasing their capital—for the worthy couple fell into the hands of a

talented company, whose agents robbed them at Frascati's in Paris, and again in Hamburg and various health resorts, so that hardly a year had passed when Bodlevski one fine night woke up to the fact that they no longer possessed a ruble. But they had passed a brilliant year, their arrival in the great cities had had its effect, and especially since Natasha had become a person of title; in the course of the year she succeeded in purchasing an Austrian barony at a very reasonable figure—a barony which, of course, only existed on paper.

When all his money was gone, there was nothing left for Bodlevski but to enroll himself a member of the company which had so successfully accomplished the transfer of his funds to their own pockets. Natasha's beauty and Bodlevski's brains were such strong arguments that the company willingly accepted them as new recruits. The two paid dear for their knowledge, it is true, but their knowledge presently began to bear fruit in considerable abundance. Day followed day, and year succeeded year, a long series of horribly anxious nights, violent feelings, mental perturbations, crafty and subtle schemes, a complete cycle of rascalities, an entire science of covering up tracks, and the perpetual shadow of justice, prison, and perhaps the scaffold. Bodlevski, with his obstinate, persistent, and concentrated character, reached the highest skill in card-sharping and the allied wiles. All games of "chance" were for him games of skill. At thirty he looked at least ten years older. The life he led, with its ceaseless effort, endless mental work, perpetual anxiety, had made of him a fanatical worshiper at the shrine of trickery. He dried up visibly in body and grew old in mind, mastering all the difficult arts of his profession, and only gained confidence and serenity when he had reached the highest possible skill in every branch of his "work." From that moment he took a new lease of life; he grew younger, he became gay and self-confident, his health even visibly improved, and he assumed the air and manner of a perfect gentleman.

As for Natasha, her life and efforts in concert with Bodlevski by no means had the same wearing effect on her as on him. Her proud, decided nature received all these impressions quite differently. She continued to blossom out, to grow handsomer, to enjoy life, to take hearts captive. All the events which aroused so keen a mental struggle in her companion she met with entire equanimity. The reason was this: When she made up her mind to anything, she always decided at once and with unusual completeness; a very short time given to keen and accurate consideration, a rapid weighing of the gains and losses of the matter in hand, and then she went forward coldly and unswervingly on her chosen path. Her first aim in life had been revenge, then a brilliant and luxurious life—and she knew that they would cost dear. Therefore, once embarked on her undertaking, Natasha remained calm and indifferent, brilliantly distinguished, and ensnaring the just and the unjust alike. Her intellect, education, skill, resource, and innate tact made it possible for her everywhere to gain a footing in select aristocratic society, and to play by no means the least rôle there. Many beauties envied her, detested her, spoke evil of her, and yet sought her friendship, because she almost always queened it in society. Her friendship and sympathy always seemed so cordial, so sincere and tender, and her epigrams were so pointed and poisonous, that every hostile criticism seemed to shrivel up in that glittering fire, and there seemed to be nothing left but to seek her friendship and good will. For instance, if things went well in Baden, one could confidently foretell that at the end of the summer season Natasha would be found in Nice or Geneva, queen of the winter season, the lioness of the day, and the arbiter of fashion. She and Bodlevski always behaved with such propriety and watchful care that not a shadow ever fell on Natasha's fame. It is true that Bodlevski had to change his name once or twice and to seek a new field for his talents, and to make sudden excursions to distant corners of Europe—sometimes in pursuit of a promising "job," sometimes to evade the too persistent at-

tentions of the police. So far everything had turned out favorably, and his name "had remained unstained," when suddenly a slight mishap befell. The matter was a trifling one, but the misfortune was that it happened in Paris. There was a chance that it might find issue in the courts and the hulks, so that there ensued a more than ordinarily rapid change of passports and a new excursion—this time to Russia, back to their native land again, after an absence of twenty years. Thus it happened that the papers announced the arrival in St. Petersburg of Baroness von Döring and Ian Vladislav Karozitch.

IX

THE CONCERT OF THE POWERS

A FEW days after there was a brilliant reunion at Princess Shadursky's. All the beauty and fashion of St. Petersburg were invited, and few who were invited failed to come. It happened that Prince Shadursky was an admirer of the fair sex, and also that he had had the pleasure of meeting the brilliant Baroness von Döring at Hamburg, and again in Paris. It was, therefore, to be expected that Baroness von Döring should be found in the midst of an admiring throng at Princess Shadursky's reception. Her brother, Ian Karozitch, was also there, suave, alert, dignified, losing no opportunity to make friends with the distinguished company that thronged he prince's rooms.

Late in the evening the baroness and her brother might have been seen engaged in a *tête-à-tête*, seated in two comfortable armchairs, and anyone who was near enough might have heard the following conversation:

"How goes it?" Karozitch asked in a low tone.

"As you see, I am making a hit," answered the baroness in the same quiet tone. But her manner was so detached and indifferent that no one could have guessed her remark was of the least significance. It should be noted

that this was her first official presentation to St. Petersburg society. And in truth her beauty, united with her lively intellect, her amiability, and her perfect taste in dress, had produced a general and even remarkable effect. People talked about her and became interested in her, and her first evening won her several admirers among those well placed in society.

"I have been paying attention to the solid capitalists," replied Karozitch; "we have made our *début* in the *rôle* of practical actors. Well, what about him?" he continued, indicating Prince Shadursky with his eyes.

"In the web," she replied, with a subtle smile.

"Then we can soon suck his brains?"

"Soon—but he must be tied tighter first. But we must not talk here." A moment later Karozitch and the baroness were in the midst of the brilliant groups of guests.

A few late comers were still arriving. "Count Kallash!" announced the footman, who stood at the chief entrance to the large hall.

At this new and almost unknown but high-sounding name, many eyes were turned toward the door through which the newcomer must enter. A hum of talk spread among the guests:

"Count Kallash——"

"Who is he——?"

"It is a Hungarian name—I think I heard of him somewhere."

"Is this his first appearance?"

"Who is this Kallash? Oh, yes, one of the old Hungarian families——"

"How interesting——"

Such questions and answers crossed each other in a running fire among the various groups of guests who filled the hall, when a young man appeared in the doorway.

He lingered a moment to glance round the rooms and the company; then, as if conscious of the remarks and glances directed toward him, but completely "ignoring"

them, and without the least shyness or awkwardness, he walked quietly through the hall to the host and hostess of the evening.

People of experience, accustomed to society and the ways of the great world, can often decide from the first minute the *rôle* which anyone is likely to play among them. People of experience, at the first view of this young man, at his first entrance, merely by the way he entered the hall, decided that his *rôle* in society would be brilliant—that more than one feminine heart would beat faster for his presence, that more than one dandy's wrath would be kindled by his successes.

"How handsome he is!" a whisper went round among the ladies. The men for the most part remained silent. A few twisted the ends of their mustache and made as though they had not noticed him. This was already enough to foreshadow a brilliant career.

And indeed Count Kallash could not have passed unnoticed, even among a thousand young men of his class. Tall and vigorous, wonderfully well proportioned, he challenged comparison with Antinoüs. His pale face, tanned by the sun, had an expression almost of weariness. His high forehead, with clustering black hair and sharply marked brows, bore the impress of passionate feeling and turbulent thought strongly repressed. It was difficult to define the color of his deep-set, somewhat sunken eyes, which now flashed with southern fire, and were now veiled, so that one seemed to be looking into an abyss. A slight mustache and pointed beard partly concealed the ironical smile that played on his passionate lips. The natural grace of good manners and quiet but admirably cut clothes completed the young man's exterior, behind which, in spite of all his reticence, could be divined a haughty and exceptional nature. A more profound psychologist would have seen in him an obstinately passionate, ungrateful nature, which takes from others everything it desires, demanding it from them as a right and without even a nod of acknowledgment. Such was Count Nicholas Kallash.

A few days after the reception at Prince Shadursky's Baroness von Döring was installed in a handsome apartment on Mokhovoi Street, at which her "brother," Ian Karozitch, or, to give him his former name, Bodlevski, was a frequent visitor. By a "lucky accident" he had met on the day following the reception our old friend Sergei Antonovitch Kovroff, the "captain of the Golden Band." Their recognition was mutual, and, after a more or less faithful recital of the events of the intervening years, they had entered into an offensive and defensive alliance.

When Baroness von Döring was comfortably settled in her new quarters, Sergei Antonovitch brought a visitor to Bodlevski: none other than the Hungarian nobleman, Count Nicholas Kallash.

"Gentlemen, you are strangers; let me introduce you to each other," said Kovroff, presenting Count Kallash to Bodlevski.

"Very glad to know you," answered the Hungarian count, to Bodlevski's astonishment in Russian; "very glad, indeed! I have several times had the honor of hearing of you. Was it not you who had some trouble about forged notes in Paris?"

"Oh, no! You are mistaken, dear count!" answered Bodlevski, with a pleasant smile. "The matter was not of the slightest importance. The amount was a trifle and I was unwilling even to appear in court!"

"You preferred a little journey to Russia, didn't you?" Kovroff remarked with a smile.

"Little vexations of that kind may happen to anyone," said Bodlevski, ignoring Kovroff's interruption. "You yourself, dear count, had some trouble about some bonds, if I am not mistaken?"

"You are mistaken," the count interrupted him sharply. "I have had various troubles, but I prefer not to talk about them."

"Gentlemen," interrupted Kovroff, "we did not come here to quarrel, but to talk business. Our good friend,

Count Kallash," he went on, turning to Bodlevski, "wishes to have the pleasure of coöperating in our common undertaking, and—I can recommend him very highly."

"Ah!" said Bodlevski, after a searching study of the count's face. "I understand! the baroness will return in a few minutes and then we can discuss matters at our leisure."

But in spite of this understanding it was evident that Bodlevski and Count Kallash had not impressed each other very favorably. This, however, did not prevent the concert of the powers from working vigorously together.

X

AN UNEXPECTED REUNION

On the wharf of the Fontauka, not far from Simeonovski Bridge, a crowd was gathered. In the midst of the crowd a dispute raged between an old woman, tattered, disheveled, miserable, and an impudent-looking youth. The old woman was evidently stupid from misery and destitution.

While the quarrel raged a new observer approached the crowd. He was walking leisurely, evidently without an aim and merely to pass the time, so it is not to be wondered at that the loud dispute arrested his attention.

"Who are you, anyway, you old hag? What is your name?" cried the impudent youth.

"My name? My name?" muttered the old woman in confusion. "I am a—I am a princess," and she blinked at the crowd.

Everyone burst out laughing. "Her Excellency, the Princess! Make way for the Princess!" cried the youth.

The old woman burst into sudden anger.

"Yes, I tell you, I am a princess by birth!" and her eyes flashed as she tried to draw herself up and impose on the bantering crowd.

"Princess What? Princess Which? Princess How?" cried the impudent youth, and all laughed loudly.

"No! Not Princess How!" answered the old woman, losing the last shred of self-restraint; "but Princess Che-che-vin-ski! Princess Anna Chechevinski!"

When he heard this name Count Kallash started and his whole expression changed. He grew suddenly pale, and with a vigorous effort pushed his way through the crowd to the miserable old woman's side.

"Come!" he said, taking her by the arm. "Come with me! I have something for you!"

"Something for me?" answered the old woman, looking up with stupid inquiry and already forgetting the existence of the impudent youth. "Yes, I'll come! What have you got for me?"

Count Kallash led her by the arm out of the crowd, which began to disperse, abashed by his appearance and air of determination. Presently he hailed a carriage, and putting the old woman in, ordered the coachman to drive to his rooms.

There he did his best to make the miserable old woman comfortable, and his housekeeper presently saw that she was washed and fed, and soon the old woman was sleeping in the housekeeper's room.

To explain this extraordinary event we must go back twenty years.

In 1838 Princess Anna Chechevinski, then in her twenty-sixth year, had defied her parents, thrown to the winds the traditions of her princely race, and fled with the man of her choice, followed by her mother's curses and the ironical congratulations of her brother, who thus became sole heir.

After a year or two she was left alone by the death of her companion, and step by step she learned all the lessons of sorrow. From one stage of misfortune to another she gradually fell into the deepest misery, and had become a poor old beggar in the streets when Count Kallash came so unexpectedly to her rescue.

It will be remembered that, as a result of Natasha's act of vengeance, the elder Princess Chechevinski left behind her only a fraction of the money her son expected to inherit. And this fraction he by no means hoarded, but with cynical disregard of the future he poured money out like water, gambling, drinking, plunging into every form of dissipation. Within a few months his entire inheritance was squandered.

Several years earlier Prince Chechevinski had taken a deep interest in conjuring and had devoted time and care to the study of various forms of parlor magic. He had even paid considerable sums to traveling conjurers in exchange for their secrets. Naturally gifted, he had mastered some of the most difficult tricks, and his skill in card conjuring would not have done discredit even to a professional magician.

The evening when his capital had almost melted away and the shadow of ruin lay heavy upon him, he happened to be present at a reception where card play was going on and considerable sums were staked.

A vacancy at one of the tables could not be filled, and, in spite of his weak protest of unwillingness, Prince Chechevinski was pressed into service. He won for the first few rounds, and then began to lose, till the amount of his losses far exceeded the slender remainder of his capital. A chance occurred where, by the simple expedient of neutralizing the cut, mere child's play for one so skilled in conjuring, he was able to turn the scale in his favor, winning back in a single game all that he had already lost. He had hesitated for a moment, feeling the abyss yawning beneath him; then he had falsed, made the pass, and won the game. That night he swore to himself that he would never cheat again, never again be tempted to dishonor his birth; and he kept his oath till his next run of bad luck, when he once more neutralized the cut and turned the "luck" in his direction.

The result was almost a certainty from the outset, Prince Chechevinski became a habitual card sharper.

For a long time fortune favored him. His mother's repu-

tation for wealth, the knowledge that he was her sole heir, the high position of the family, shielded him from suspicion. Then came the thunderclap. He was caught in the act of "dealing a second" in the English Club, and driven from the club as a blackleg. Other reverses followed: a public refusal on the part of an officer to play cards with him, followed by a like refusal to give him satisfaction in a duel; a second occasion in which he was caught redhanded; a criminal trial; six years in Siberia. After two years he escaped by way of the Chinese frontier, and months after returned to Europe. For two years he practiced his skill at Constantinople. Then he made his way to Buda-Pesth, then to Vienna. While in the dual monarchy, he had come across a poverty-stricken Magyar noble, named Kallash, whom he had sheltered in a fit of generous pity, and who had died in his room at the Golden Eagle Inn. Prince Chechevinski, who had already borne many aliases, showed his grief at the old Magyar's death by adopting his name and title; hence it was that he presented himself in St. Petersburg in the season of 1858 under the high-sounding title of Count Kallash.

An extraordinary coincidence, already described, had brought him face to face with his sister Anna, whom he had never even heard of in all the years since her flight. He found her now, poverty-stricken, prematurely old, almost demented, and, though he had hated her cordially in days gone by, his pity was aroused by her wretchedness, and he took her to his home, clothed and fed her, and surrounded her with such comforts as his bachelor apartment offered.

In the days that followed, every doubt he might have had as to her identity was dispelled. She talked freely of their early childhood, of their father's death, of their mother; she even spoke of her brother's coldness and hostility in terms which drove away the last shadow of doubt whether she was really his sister. But at first he made no corresponding revelations, remaining for her only Count Kallash.

XI

THE PHOTOGRAPH ALBUM

Little by little, however, as the poor old woman recovered something of health and strength, his heart went out toward her. Telling her only certain incidents of his life, he gradually brought the narrative back to the period, twenty years before, immediately after their mother's death, and at last revealed himself to his sister, after making her promise secrecy as to his true name. Thus matters went on for nearly two years.

The broken-down old woman lived in his rooms in something like comfort, and took pleasure in dusting and arranging his things. One day, when she was tidying the sitting room, her brother was startled by a sudden exclamation, almost a cry, which broke from his sister's lips.

"Oh, heaven, it is she!" she cried, her eyes fixed on a page of the photograph album she had been dusting. "Brother, come here; for heaven's sake, who is this?"

"Baroness von Döring," curtly answered Kallash, glancing quickly at the photograph. "What do you find interesting in her?"

"It is either she or her double! Do you know who she looks like?"

"Lord only knows! Herself, perhaps!"

"No, she has a double! I am sure of it! Do you remember, at mother's, my maid Natasha?"

"Natasha?" the count considered, knitting his brows in the effort to recollect.

"Yes, Natasha, my maid. A tall, fair girl. A thick tress of chestnut hair. She had such beautiful hair! And her lips had just the same proud expression. Her eyes were piercing and intelligent, her brows were clearly marked and joined together—in a word, the very original of this photograph!"

"Ah," slowly and quietly commented the count, pressing

his hand to his brow. "Exactly. Now I remember! Yes, it is a striking likeness."

"But look closely," cried the old woman excitedly; "it is the living image of Natasha! Of course she is more matured, completely developed. How old is the baroness?"

"She must be approaching forty. But she doesn't look her age; you would imagine her to be about thirty-two from her appearance."

"There! And Natasha would be just forty by now!"

"The ages correspond," answered her brother.

"Yes." Princess Anna sighed sadly. "Twenty-two years have passed since then. But if I met her face to face I think I would recognize her at once. Tell me, who is she?"

"The baroness? How shall I tell you? She has been abroad for twenty years, and for the last two years she has lived here. In society she says she is a foreigner, but with me she is franker, and I know that she speaks Russian perfectly. She declares that her husband is somewhere in Germany, and that she lives here with her brother."

"Who is the 'brother'?" asked the old princess curiously.

"The deuce knows! He is also a bit shady. Oh, yes! Sergei Kovroff knows him; he told me something about their history; he came here with a forged passport, under the name of Vladislav Karozitch, but his real name is Kasimir Bodlevski."

"Kasimir Bodlevski," muttered the old woman, knitting her brows. "Was he not once a lithographer or an engraver, or something of the sort?"

"I think he was. I think Kovroff said something about it. He is a fine engraver still."

"He was? Well, there you are!" and Princess Anna rose quickly from her seat. "It is she—it is Natasha! She used to tell me she had a sweetheart, a Polish hero, Bodlevski. And I think his name was Kasimir. She often got my permission to slip out to visit him; she said he worked for a lithographer, and always begged me to persuade

mother to liberate her from serfdom, so that she could marry him."

This unexpected discovery meant much to Kallash. Circumstances, hitherto slight and isolated, suddenly gained a new meaning, and were lit up in a way that made him almost certain of the truth. He now remembered that Kovroff had once told him of his first acquaintance with Bodlevski, when he came on the Pole at the Cave, arranging for a false passport; he remembered that Natasha had disappeared immediately before the death of the elder Princess Chechevinski, and he also remembered how, returning from the cemetery, he had been cruelly disappointed in his expectations when he had found in the strong box a sum very much smaller than he had always counted on, and with some foundation; and before him, with almost complete certainty, appeared the conclusion that the maid's disappearance was connected with the theft of his mother's money, and especially of the securities in his sister's name, and that all this was nothing but the doing of Natasha and her companion Bodlevski.

"Very good! Perhaps this information will come in handy!" he said to himself, thinking over his future measures and plans. "Let us see—let us feel our way—perhaps it is really so! But I must go carefully and keep on my guard, and the whole thing is in my hands, dear baroness! We will spin a thread from you before all is over."

XII

THE BARONESS AT HOME

Every Wednesday Baroness von Döring received her intimate friends. She did not care for rivals, and therefore ladies were not invited to these evenings. The intimate circle of the baroness consisted of our Knights of Industry and the "pigeons" of the bureaucracy, the world of finance, the aristocracy, which were the objects of the knights' de-

sires. It often happened, however, that the number of guests at these intimate evenings went as high as fifty, and sometimes even more.

The baroness was passionately fond of games of chance, and always sat down to the card table with enthusiasm. But as this was done conspicuously, in sight of all her guests, the latter could not fail to note that fortune obstinately turned away from the baroness. She almost never won on the green cloth; sometimes Kovroff won, sometimes Kallash, sometimes Karozitch, but with the slight difference that the last won more seldom and less than the other two.

Thus every Wednesday a considerable sum found its way from the pocketbook of the baroness into that of one of her colleagues, to find its way back again the next morning. The purpose of this clever scheme was that the "pigeons" who visited the luxurious salons of the baroness, and whose money paid the expenses of these salons, should not have the smallest grounds for suspicion that the dear baroness's apartment was nothing but a den of sharpers. Her guests all considered her charming, to begin with, and also rich and independent and passionate by nature. This explained her love of play and the excitement it brought, and which she would not give up, in spite of her repeated heavy losses.

Her colleagues, the Knights of Industry, acted on a carefully devised and rigidly followed plan. They were far from putting their uncanny skill in motion every Wednesday. So long as they had no big game in sight, the game remained clean and honest. In this way the band might lose two or three thousand rubles, but such a loss had no great importance, and was soon made up when some fat "pigeon" appeared.

It sometimes happened that this wily scheme of honest play went on for five or six weeks in succession, so that the small fry, winning the band's money, remained entirely convinced that it was playing in an honorable and respectable private house, and very naturally spread abroad the fame

of it throughout the whole city. But when the fat pigeon at last appeared, the band put forth all its forces, all the wiles of the black art, and in a few hours made up for the generous losses of a month of honorable and irreproachable play on the green cloth.

Midnight was approaching.

The baroness's rooms were brilliantly lit up, but, thanks to the thick curtains which covered the windows, the lights could not be seen from the street, though several carriages were drawn up along the sidewalk.

Opening into the elegant drawing-room was a not less elegant card room, appreciatively nicknamed the Inferno by the band. In it stood a large table with a green cloth, on which lay a heap of bank notes and two little piles of gold, before which sat Sergei Antonovitch Kovroff, presiding over the bank with the composure of a true gentleman.

What Homeric, Jovine calm rested on every feature of his face! What charming, fearless self-assurance, what noble self-confidence in his smile, in his glance! What grace, what distinction in his pose, and especially in the hand which dealt the cards! Sergei Kovroff's hands were decidedly worthy of attention. They were almost always clad in new gloves, which he only took off on special occasions, at dinner, or when he had some writing to do, or when he sat down to a game of cards. As a result, his hands were almost feminine in their delicacy, the sensibility of the finger tips had reached an extraordinary degree of development, equal to that of one born blind. And those fingers were skillful, adroit, alert, their every movement carried out with that smooth, indefinable grace which is almost always possessed by the really high-class card sharper. His fingers were adorned with numerous rings, in which sparkled diamonds and other precious stones. And it was not for nothing that Sergei Kovroff took pride in them! This glitter of diamonds, scattering rainbow rays, dazzled the eyes of his fellow players. When Sergei Kovroff sat down to preside over the bank, the sparkling of the diamonds admirably masked those motions of his fingers which needed to be

masked; they almost insensibly drew away the eyes of the players from his fingers, and this was most of all what Sergei Kovroff desired.

Round the table about thirty guests were gathered. Some of them sat, but most of them played standing, with anxious faces, feverishly sparkling eyes, and breathing heavily and unevenly. Some were pale, some flushed, and all watched with passionate eagerness the fall of the cards. There were also some who had perfect command of themselves, distinguished by extraordinary coolness, and jesting lightly whether they lost or won. But such happily constituted natures are always a minority when high play is going on.

Silence reigned in the Inferno. There was almost no conversation; only once in a while was heard a remark, in a whisper or an undertone, addressed by a player to his neighbor; the only sound was that short, dry rustle of the cards and the crackling of new bank notes, or the tinkle of gold coins making their way round the table from the bank to the players, and from the players back to the bank.

The two Princes Shadursky, father and son, both lost heavily. They sat opposite Sergei Kovroff, and between them sat Baroness von Döring, who played in alliance with them. The clever Natasha egged them on, kindling their excitement with all the skill and calculation possible to one whose blood was as cold as the blood of a fish, and both the Shadurskys had lost their heads, no longer knowing how much they were losing.

XIII

AN EXPLANATION

Count Kallash and his sister had just breakfasted when the count's French footman entered the study.

"Madame la baronne von Döring!" he announced obsequiously.

Brother and sister exchanged a rapid glance.

"Now is our opportunity to make sure," said Kallash, with a smile.

"If it is she, I shall recognize her by her voice," whispered Princess Anna. "Shall I remain here or go?"

"Remain in the meantime; it will be a curious experience. *Faites entrer!*" he added to the footman.

A moment later light, rapid footsteps were heard in the entrance hall, and the rustling of a silk skirt.

"How do you do, count! I have come to see you for a moment. I came in all haste, on purpose. I have come *in person*, you must be duly appreciative! Vladislav is too busy, and the matter is an important one. I wanted to see you at the earliest opportunity. Well, we may all congratulate ourselves. Fate and fortune are decidedly on our side!" said the baroness, speaking rapidly, as she entered the count's study.

"What has happened? What is the news?" asked the count, going forward to meet her.

"We have learned that the Shadurskys have just received a large sum of money; they have sold an estate, and the purchaser has paid them in cash. Our opportunity has come. Heaven forbid that we should lose it! We must devise a plan to make the most of it."

The baroness suddenly stopped short in the middle of the sentence, and became greatly confused, noticing that there was a third person present.

"Forgive me! I did not give you warning," said the count, shrugging his shoulders and smiling; "permit me! *Princess Anna Chechevinski!*" he continued with emphasis, indicating his poor, decrepit sister. "Of course you would not have recognized her, baroness."

"But *I* recognized Natasha immediately," said the old woman quietly, her eyes still fixed on Natasha's face.

The baroness suddenly turned as white as a sheet, and with trembling hands caught the back of a heavy armchair.

Kallash with extreme politeness assisted her to a seat.

"You didn't expect to meet me, Natasha?" said the old woman gently and almost caressingly, approaching her.

"I do not know you. Who are you?" the baroness managed to whisper, by a supreme effort.

"No wonder; I am so changed," replied Princess Anna. "But *you* are just the same. There is hardly any change at all."

Natasha began to recover her composure.

"I don't understand you," she said coldly, contracting her brows.

"But I understand *you* perfectly."

"Allow me, princess," Kallash interrupted her, "permit me to have an explanation with the baroness; she and I know each other well. And if you will pardon me, I shall ask you in the meantime to withdraw."

And he courteously conducted his sister to the massive oak doors, which closed solidly after her.

"What does this mean?" said the baroness, rising angrily, her gray eyes flashing at the count from under her broad brows.

"A coincidence," answered Kallash, shrugging his shoulders with an ironical smile.

"How a coincidence? Speak clearly!"

"The former mistress has recognized her former maid—that is all."

"How does this woman come to be here? Who is she?"

"I have told you already; Princess Anna Chechevinski. And as to how she came here, that was also a coincidence, and a strange one."

"Impossible!" exclaimed the baroness.

"Why impossible? They say the dead sometimes return from the tomb, and the princess is still alive. And why should the matter not have happened thus, for instance? Princess Anna Chechevinski's maid Natasha took advantage of the confidence and illness of the elder princess to steal from her strong box, with the aid of her sweetheart, Kasimir Bodlevski, money and securities—mark

this, baroness—securities in the name of Princess Anna. And might it not happen that this same lithographer Bodlevski should get false passports at the Cave, for himself and his sweetheart, and flee with her across the frontier, and might not this same maid, twenty years later, return to Russia under the name of Baroness von Döring? You must admit that there is nothing fantastic in all this! What is the use of concealing? You see I know everything!"

"And what follows from all this?" replied the baroness with a forced smile of contempt.

"Much *may* follow from it," significantly but quietly replied Kallash. "But at present the only important matter is, that I know all. I repeat it—*all*."

"Where are your facts?" asked the baroness.

"Facts? Hm!" laughed Kallash. "If facts are needed, they will be forthcoming. Believe me, dear baroness, that if I had not legally sufficient facts in my hands, I would not have spoken to you of this."

Kallash lied, but lied with the most complete appearance of probability.

The baroness again grew confused and turned white.

"Where are your facts? Put them in my hands!" she said at last, after a prolonged silence.

"Oh, this is too much! Get hold of them yourself!" the count replied, with the same smile. "The facts are generally set forth to the prisoner by the court; but it is enough for you in the meantime to know that the facts exist, and that they are in my possession. Believe, if you wish. If you do not wish, do not believe. I will neither persuade you nor dissuade you."

"And this means that I am in your power? she said slowly, raising her piercing glance to his face.

"Yes; it means that you are in my power," quietly and confidently answered Count Kallash.

"But you forget that you and I are in the same boat."

"You mean that I am a sharper, like you and Bodlevski? Well, you are right. We are all berries of the

same bunch—except *her*" (and he indicated the folding doors). "She, thanks to many things, has tasted misery, but she is honest. But we are all rascals, and I first of all. You are perfectly right in that. If you wish to get me in your power—try to find some facts against me. Then we shall be quits!"

"And what is it you wish?"

"It is too late for justice, at least so far as she is concerned," replied the count, with a touch of sadness; "but it is not too late for a measure of reparation. But we can discuss that later," he went on more lightly, as if throwing aside the heavy impression produced by the thought of Princess Anna's misery. "And now, dear baroness, let us return to business, the business of Prince Shadursky! I will think the matter over, and see whether anything suggests itself."

He courteously conducted the baroness to the carriage, and they parted, to all appearance, friends. But there were dangerous elements for both in that seeming friendship.

XIV

GOLD MINING

A WONDERFUL scheme was hatched in Count Kallash's fertile brain. Inspired by the thought of Prince Shadursky's newly replenished millions, he devised a plan for the gang which promised brilliant results, and only needed the aid of a discreet and skillful confederate. And what confederate could be more trustworthy than Sergei Antonovitch Kovroff? So the two friends were presently to be found in secret consultation in the count's handsome study, with a bottle of good Rhine wine before them, fine cigars between their lips, and the memory of a well-served breakfast lingering pleasantly in their minds. They were talking about the new resources of the Shadurskys.

"To take their money at cards—what a wretched busi-

ness—and so infernally commonplace," said Count Kallash. "To tell you the truth, I have for a long time been sick of cards! And, besides, time is money! Why should we waste several weeks, or even months, over something that could be done in a few days?"

Kovroff agreed completely, but at the same time put the question, if not cards, what plan was available?

"That is it exactly!" cried Kallash, warming up. "I have thought it all over. The problem is this: we must think up something that would surprise Satan himself, something that would make all Hades smile and blow us hot kisses. But what of Hades?—that's all nonsense. We must do something that will make the whole Golden Band throw up their caps. That is what we have to do!"

"Quite a problem," lazily answered Kovroff, chewing the end of his cigar. "But you are asking too much."

"But that is not all," the count interrupted him; "listen! This is what my problem demands. We must think of some project that unites two precious qualities: first, a rapid and huge profit; second, entire absence of risk."

"Conditions not altogether easy to fulfill," remarked Kovroff doubtfully.

"So it seems. And daring plans are not to be picked up in the street, but are the result of inspiration. It is what is called a 'heavenly gift,' my dear friend."

"And you have had an inspiration?" smiled Sergei Antonovitch, with a slightly ironical shade of friendly skepticism.

"I have had an inspiration," replied the supposititious Hungarian nobleman, falling into the other's tone.

"And your muse is——?"

"The tenth of the muses," the count interrupted him: "another name is Industry."

"She is the muse of all of us."

"And mine in particular. But we are not concerned with her, but with her prophetic revelations."

"Oh, dear count! Circumlocutions apart! This Rhine

wine evidently carries you to misty Germany. Tell me simply what the matter is."

"The matter is simply this: we must institute a society of 'gold miners,' and we must find gold in places where the geological indications are dead against it. That is the problem. The Russian laws, under threat of arrest and punishment, sternly forbid the citizens of the Russian Empire, and likewise the citizens of other lands within the empire, to buy or sell the noble metals in their crude form, that is, in nuggets, ore, or dust. For example, if you bought gold in the rough from me—gold dust, for example —we should both, according to law, have to take a pleasant little trip beyond the Ural Mountains to Siberia, and there we should have to engage in mining the precious metal ourselves. A worthy occupation, no doubt, but not a very profitable one for us."

"Our luxuries would be strictly limited," jested Kovroff, with a wry smile.

"There it is! You won't find many volunteers for that occupation, and that is the fulcrum of my whole plan. You must understand that gold dust in the mass is practically indistinguishable in appearance from brass filings. Let us suppose that we secretly sell some perfectly pure brass filings for gold dust, and that they are readily bought of us, because we sell considerably below the market rate. It goes without saying that the purchaser will presently discover that we have done him brown. But, I ask you, will he go and accuse us knowing that, as the penalty for his purchase, he will have to accompany us along the Siberian road?"

"No man is his own enemy," sententiously replied Kovroff, beginning to take a vivid interest in what his companion was saying. "But how are you going to work it?"

"You will know at the proper time. The chief thing is, that our problem is solved in the most decisive manner. You and I are pretty fair judges of human nature, so we may be pretty sure that we shall always find purchasers,

and I suggest that we make a beginning on young Prince Shadursky. How we shall get him into it is my business. I'll tell you later on. But how do you like the general idea of my plan?"

"It's clever enough!" cried Kovroff, pressing his hand with the gay enthusiasm of genuine interest.

"For this truth much thanks!" cried Kallash, clinking glasses with him. "It is clever—that is the best praise I could receive from you. Let us drink to the success of my scheme!"

XV

THE FISH BITES

THREE days after this conversation the younger prince Shadursky dined with Sergei Antonovitch Kovroff.

That morning he received a note from Kovroff, in which the worthy Sergei complained of ill health and begged the prince to come and dine with him and cheer him up.

The prince complied with his request, and appearing at the appointed time found Count Kallash alone with his host.

Among other gossip, the prince announced that he expected shortly to go to Switzerland, as he had bad reports of the health of his mother, who was in Geneva.

At this news Kallash glanced significantly toward Kovroff.

Passing from topic to topic, the conversation finally turned to the financial position of Russia. Sergei Antonovitch, according to his expression, "went to the root of the matter," and indicated the "source of the evil," very frankly attacking the policy of the government, which did everything to discourage gold mining, hedging round this most important industry with all kinds of difficulties, and practically prohibiting the free production of the precious metals by laying on it a dead weight of costly formalities.

" I have facts ready to hand," he went on, summing up his argument. " I have an acquaintance here, an employee of one of the best-known men in the gold-mining industry." Here Kovroff mentioned a well-known name. " He is now in St. Petersburg. Well, a few days ago he suddenly came to me as if he had something weighing on his mind. And I have had business relations with him in times past. Well, what do you think? He suddenly made me a proposal, secretly of course; would I not take some gold dust off his hands? You must know that these trusted employees every year bring several hundred pounds of gold from Asia, and of course it stands to reason that they cannot get rid of it in the ordinary way, but smuggle it through private individuals. It is uncommonly profitable for the purchasers, because they buy far below the market rates. So there are plenty of purchasers. Several of the leading jewelers " (and here he named three or four of the best-known firms) " never refuse such a deal, and last year a banking house in Berlin bought a hundred pounds' weight of gold through agents here. Well, this same employee, my acquaintance, is looking for an opportunity to get rid of his wares. And he tells me he managed to bring in about forty pounds of gold, if not more. I introduce this fact to illustrate the difficulties put in the way of enterprise by our intelligent government."

Shadursky did not greatly occupy himself with serious questions and he was totally ignorant of all details of financial undertakings. It was, therefore, perfectly easy for Sergei Antonovitch to assume a tone of solid, practical sense, which imposed completely on the young prince. Young Shadursky, from politeness, and to prove his worldly wisdom, assented to Kovroff's statements with equal decision. All the same, from this conversation, he quite clearly seized on the idea that under certain circumstances it would be possible to buy gold at a much lower price than that demanded by the Imperial Bank. And this was just the thought which Kallash and Kovroff wished to sow in the young prince's mind.

"Of course, I myself do not go in for that kind of business," went on Kovroff carelessly, "and so I could not give my friend any help. But if some one were going abroad, for instance, he might well risk such an operation, which would pay him a very handsome profit."

"How so? In what way?" asked Shadursky.

"Very simply. You buy the goods here, as I already said, much below the government price. So that to begin with you make a very profitable bargain. Then you go abroad with your wares and there, as soon as the exchange value of gold goes up, you can sell it at the nearest bank. I know, for instance, that the agent of the —— Bank" (and he mentioned a name well known in St. Petersburg) "made many a pretty penny for himself by just such a deal. This is how it was: He bought gold dust for forty thousand rubles, and six weeks later got rid of it in Hamburg for sixty thousand. Whatever you may say, fifty per cent on your capital in a month and a half is pretty good business."

"Deuce take it! A pretty profitable bargain, without a doubt!" cried Shadursky, jumping from his chair. "It would just suit me! I could get rid of it in Geneva or Paris," he went on in a jesting tone.

"What do you think? Of course!" Sergei Antonovitch took him up, but in a serious tone. "You or some one else—in any case it would be a good bargain. For my acquaintance has to go back to Asia, and has only a few days to spare. He doesn't know where to turn and rather than take his gold back with him, he would willingly let it go at an even lower rate than the smugglers generally ask. If I had enough free cash I would go in for it myself."

"It looks a good proposition," commented Count Kallash.

"It is certainly very enticing; what do you think?" said Prince Shadursky interrogatively, folding his arms.

"Hm—yes! very enticing," answered Kovroff. "A fine chance for anyone who has the money."

"I would not object! I would not object!" protested Shadursky. "Suppose you let me become acquainted with your friend."

"You? Well—" And Kovroff considered; "if you wish. Why not? Only I warn you, first, if you are going to buy, buy quickly, for my friend can't wait; and secondly, keep the matter a complete secret, for very unpleasant results might follow."

"That goes without saying. That stands to reason," assented Shadursky. "I can get the money at once and I am just going abroad, in a day or two at the latest. So it would be foolish to miss such a chance. So it is a bargain?" And he held out his hand to Kovroff.

"How a bargain?" objected the cautious Sergei Antonovitch. "I am not personally concerned in the matter, and you must admit, my dear prince, that I can make no promises for my acquaintance."

"I don't mean that!" cried Shadursky. "I only ask you to arrange for me to meet him. Bring us together—and drop him a hint that I do not object to buying his wares. You will confer a great obligation on me."

"Oh, that is quite a different matter. That I can always do; the more so, because we are such good friends. Why should I not do you such a trifling service? As far as an introduction is concerned, you may count on it."

And they cordially shook each other by the hand.

XVI

GOLD DUST

Both Kallash and Kovroff were too cautious to take an immediate, personal part in the gold-dust sale. There was a certain underling, Mr. Escrocevitch by name, at Sergei Kovroff's beck and call—a shady person, rather dirty in aspect, and who was, therefore, only admitted to Sergei's presence by the back door and through the kitchen, and

even then only at times when there were no outsiders present.

Mr. Escrocevitch was a person of general utility and was especially good at all kinds of conjuring tricks. Watches, snuff-boxes, cigar-cases, silver spoons, and even heavy bronze paper-weights acquired the property of suddenly vanishing from under his hands, and of suddenly reappearing in a quite unexpected quarter. This valuable gift had been acquired by Mr. Escrocevitch in his early years, when he used to wander among the Polish fairs, swallowing burning flax for the delectation of the public and disgorging endless yards of ribbon and paper.

Mr. Escrocevitch was a precious and invaluable person also owing to his capacity of assuming any *rôle*, turning himself into any given character, and taking on the corresponding tone, manners, and appearance, and he was, further, a pretty fair actor.

He it was who was chosen to play the part of the Siberian employee.

Not more than forty-eight hours had passed since the previous conversation. Prince Shadursky was just up, when his footman announced to him that a Mr. Valyajnikoff wished to see him.

The prince put on his dressing gown and went into the drawing-room, where the tolerably presentable but strangely dressed person of Mr. Escrocevitch presented itself to him.

"Permit me to have the honor of introducing myself," he began, bowing to Prince Shadursky; "I am Ivanovitch Valyajnikoff. Mr. Sergei Antonovitch Kovroff was so good as to inform me of a certain intention of yours about the dust. So, if your excellency has not changed your mind, I am ready to sell it to you with pleasure."

"Very good of you," answered Prince Shadursky, smiling gayly, and giving him a chair.

"To lose no time over trifles," continued Mr. Escrocevitch, "let me invite you to my quarters. I am staying at a hotel; you can see the goods there; you can make

tests, and, if you are satisfied, I shall be very happy to oblige your excellency."

Prince Shadursky immediately finished dressing, ordered his carriage, and went out with the supposititious Valyajnikoff. They drove to a shabby hotel and went to a dingy room.

"This is my poor abode. I am only here on the wing, so to speak. I humbly request you to be seated," Mr. Escrocevitch said obsequiously. "Not to lose precious time, perhaps your excellency would like to look at my wares? Here they are—and I am most willing to show them."

And he dragged from under the bed a big trunk, in which were five canvas bags of various sizes, packed full and tied tightly.

"Here, here it is! This is our Siberian dust," he said, smiling and bowing, indicating the trunk with a wave of his hand, as if introducing it to Prince Shadursky.

"Would not your excellency be so good as to choose one of these bags to make a test? It will be much better if you see yourself that the business is above board, with no swindle about it. Choose whichever you wish!"

Shadursky lifted one of the bags from the trunk, and when Mr. Escrocevitch untied it, before the young prince's eyes appeared a mass of metallic grains, at which he gazed not without inward pleasure.

"How are you going to make a test?" he asked. "We have no blow-pipes nor test-tubes here?"

"Make your mind easy, your excellency! We shall find everything we require—blow-pipes and test-tubes and nitric acid, and even a decimal weighing machine. In our business we arrange matters in such a way that we need not disturb outsiders. Only charcoal we haven't got, but we can easily send for some."

And going to the door, he gave the servant in the passage an order, and a few minutes later the latter returned with a dish of charcoal.

"First class! Now everything is ready," cried Mr. Es-

crocevitch, rubbing his hands; and for greater security he turned the key in the door.

"Take whichever piece of charcoal you please, your excellency; but, not to soil your hands, you had better let me take it myself, and you sprinkle some of the dust on it," and he humbled himself before the prince. "Forgive me for asking you to do it all yourself, since it is not from any lack of politeness on my part, but simply in order that your excellency should be fully convinced that there is no deception." Saying this, he got his implements ready and lit the lamp.

The blow-pipe came into action. Valyajnikoff made the experiment, and Shadursky attentively followed every movement. The charcoal glowed white hot, the dust ran together and disappeared, and in its place, when the charcoal had cooled a little, and the amateur chemist presented it to Prince Shadursky, the prince saw a little ball of gold lying in a crevice of the charcoal, such as might easily have formed under the heat of the blow-pipe.

"Take the globule, your excellency, and place it, for greater security, in your pocketbook," said Escrocevitch; "you may even wrap it up in a bit of paper; and keep the sack of gold dust yourself, so that there can be no mistake."

Shadursky gladly followed this last piece of advice.

"And now, your excellency, I should like you kindly to select another bag; we shall make two or three more tests in the same way."

The prince consented to this also.

Escrocevitch handed him a new piece of charcoal to sprinkle dust on, and once more brought the blow-pipe into operation. And again the brass filings disappeared and in the crevice appeared a new globule of gold.

"Well, perhaps these two tests will be sufficient. What is your excellency good enough to think on that score?" asked the supposed Valyajnikoff.

"What is the need of further tests? The matter is clear enough," assented the prince.

"If it is satisfactory, we shall proceed to make it even more satisfactory. Here we have a touch-stone, and here we have some nitric acid. Try the globules on the touch-stone physically, and, so to speak, with the nitric acid chemically. And if you wish to make even more certain, this is what we shall do. What quantity of gold does your excellency wish to take?"

"The more the better. I am ready to buy all these bags."

"*Very* much obliged to your excellency, as this will suit me admirably," said Escrocevitch, bowing low. "And so, if your excellency is ready, then I humbly beg you to take each bag, examine it, and seal it with your excellency's own seal. Then let us take one of the globules and go to one of the best jewelers in St. Petersburg. Let him tell us the value of the gold and in this way the business will be exact; there will be no room for complaint on either side, since everything will be fair and above board."

The prince was charmed with the honesty and frankness of Mr. Valyajnikoff.

They went together to one of the best-known jewelers, who, in their presence, made a test and announced that the gold was chemically pure, without any alloy, and therefore of the highest value.

On their return to the hotel, Mr. Escrocevitch weighed the bags, which turned out to weigh forty-eight pounds. Allowing three pounds for the weight of the bags, this left forty-five pounds of pure gold.

"How much a pound do you want?" Shadursky asked him.

"A pretty low price, your excellency," answered the Siberian, with a shrug of his shoulders, "as I am selling from extreme necessity, because I have to leave for Siberia; I've spent too much time and money in St. Petersburg already; and if I cannot sell my wares, I shall not be able to go at all. I assume that the government price is known to your excellency?"

"But I am willing to take two hundred rubles a pound.

I can't take a kopeck less, and even so I am making a reduction of nearly a hundred rubles the pound."

"All right!" assented Shadursky. "That will amount to—" he went on, knitting his brows, "forty-five pounds at two hundred rubles a pound——"

"It will make exactly nine thousand, your excellency. Just exactly nine," Escrocevitch obsequiously helped him out. The prince, cutting the matter short, immediately gave him a check, and taking the trunk with the coveted bags, drove with the Siberian employee to his father's house, where the elder Prince Shadursky, at his son's pressing demand, though very unwillingly, exchanged the check for nine thousand rubles in bills, for which Ivan Ivanovitch Valyajnikoff forthwith gave a receipt. The prince was delighted with his purchase, and he did not utter a syllable about it to anyone except Kovroff.

Sergei Antonovitch gave him a friendly counsel not to waste any time, but to go abroad at once, as, according to the *Exchange Gazette*, gold was at that moment very high, so that he had an admirable opportunity to get rid of his wares on very favorable terms.

The prince, in fact, without wasting time got his traveling passport, concealed his purchase with the utmost care, and set out for the frontier, announcing that he was on his way to his mother, whose health imperatively demanded his presence.

The success of the whole business depended on the fact that brass filings, which bear a strong external resemblance to gold dust, are dissipated in the strong heat of the blowpipe. The charcoal was prepared beforehand, a slight hollow being cut in it with a penknife, in the bottom of which is placed a globule of pure gold, the top of which is just below the level of the charcoal, and the hollow is filled up with powdered charcoal mixed with a little beeswax. The "chemist" who makes the experiments must make himself familiar with the distinctive appearance of the charcoal, so as to pick it out from among several pieces, and must remember exactly where the crevice is.

On this first occasion, Escrocevitch had prepared all four pieces of charcoal, which were brought by the servant in the passage. He chose as his temporary abode a hotel whose proprietor was an old ally of his, and the servant was also a confederate.

Thus was founded the famous "Gold Products Company," which is still in very successful operation, and is constantly widening its sphere of activity.

XVII

THE DELUGE

Count Kallash finally decided on his course of action. It was too late to seek justice for his sister, but not too late for a tardy reparation. The gang had prospered greatly, and the share of Baroness von Döring and Bodlevski already amounted to a very large figure. Count Kallash determined to demand for his sister a sum equal to that of the securities in her name which Natasha had stolen, calculating that this would be enough to maintain his sister in peace and comfort to the end of her days. His own life was too stormy, too full of risks for him to allow his sister's fate to depend on his, so he had decided to settle her in some quiet nook where, free from danger, she might dream away her few remaining years.

To his surprise Baroness von Döring flatly refused to be put under contribution.

"Your demand is outrageous," she said. "I am not going to be the victim of any such plot!"

"Very well, I will compel you to unmask?"

"To unmask? What do you mean, count? You forget yourself!"

"Well, then, I shall try to make you remember me!" And Kallash turned his back on her and strode from the room. A moment later, and she heard the door close loudly behind him.

The baroness had already told Bodlevski of her meeting with Princess Anna, and she now hurried to him for counsel. They agreed that their present position, with Kallash's threats hanging over their heads, was intolerable. But what was to be done?

Bodlevski paced up and down the room, biting his lips, and seeking some decisive plan.

"We must act in such a way," he said, coming to a stand before the baroness, "as to get rid of this fellow once for all. I think he is dangerous, and it never does any harm to take proper precautions. Get the money ready, Natasha; we must give it to him."

"What! give him the money!" and the baroness threw up her hands. "Will that get us out of his power? Can we feel secure? It will only last till something new happens. At the first occasion——"

"Which will also be the last!" interrupted Bodlevski. "Suppose we do give him the money to-day; does that mean that we give it for good? Not at all! It will be back in my pocket to-morrow! Let us think it out properly!" and he gave her a friendly pat on the shoulder, and sat down in an easy chair in front of her.

The result of their deliberations was a little note addressed to Count Kallash:

"Dear Count," it ran, "I was guilty of an act of folly toward you to-day. I am ashamed of it, and wish to make amends as soon as possible. We have always been good friends, so let us forget our little difference, the more so that an alliance is much more advantageous to us both than a quarrel. Come this evening to receive the money you spoke of, and to clasp in amity the hand of your devoted friend, Von D."

Kallash came about ten o'clock in the evening, and received from Bodlevski the sum of fifty thousand rubles in notes. The baroness was very amiable, and persuaded him to have some tea. There was not a suggestion of

future difficulties, and everything seemed to promise perfect harmony for the future. Bodlevski talked over plans of future undertakings, and told him, with evident satisfaction, that they had just heard of the arrest of the younger Prince Shadursky, in Paris, for attempting to defraud a bank by a pretended sale of gold dust. Count Kallash was also gay, and a certain satisfaction filled his mind at the thought of his sister's security, as he felt the heavy packet of notes in his pocket. He smoked his cigar with evident satisfaction, sipping the fragrant tea from time to time. The conversation was gay and animated, and for some reason or other turned to the subject of clubs.

"Ah, yes," interposed Bodlevski, "*à propos!* I expect to be a member of the Yacht Club this summer. Let me recommend to you a new field of action. They will disport themselves on the green water, and we on the green cloth! By the way, I forgot to speak of it—I bought a boat the other day, a mere rowboat. It is on the Fontauka Canal, at the Simeonovski bridge. We must come for a row some day."

"Delightful," exclaimed the baroness. "But why some day? Why not to-night? The moon is beautiful, and, indeed, it is hardly dark at midnight. Your speaking of boats has filled me with a sudden desire to go rowing. What do you say, dear count?" and she turned amiably to Kallash.

Count Kallash at once consented, considering the baroness's idea an admirable one, and they were soon on their way toward the Simeonovski bridge.

"How delightful it is!" cried the baroness, some half hour later, as they were gliding over the quiet water. "Count, do you like strong sensations?" she asked suddenly.

"I am fond of strong sensations of every kind," he replied, taking up her challenge.

"Well, I am going to offer you a little sensation, though it always greatly affects me. Everything is just right for it, and I am in the humor, too."

"What is it to be?" asked Count Kallash indifferently.

"You will see in a moment. Do you know that there are underground canals in St. Petersburg?"

"In St. Petersburg?" asked Kallash in astonishment.

"Yes, in St. Petersburg! A whole series of underground rivers, wide enough for a boat to pass through. I have rowed along them several times. Does not that offer a new sensation, something quite unlike St. Petersburg?"

"Yes, it is certainly novel," answered Count Kallash, now interested. "Where are they? Pray show them to me."

"There is one a few yards off. Shall we enter? You are not afraid?" she said with a smile of challenge.

"By no means—unless you command me to be afraid," Kallash replied in the same tone. "Let us enter at once!"

"Kasimir, turn under the arch!" and the boat cut across the canal toward a half circle of darkness. A moment more and the darkness engulfed them completely. They were somewhere under the Admiralty, not far from St. Isaac's Cathedral. Away ahead of them was a tiny half circle of light, where the canal joined the swiftly flowing Neva. Carriages rumbled like distant thunder above their heads.

"Deuce take it! it is really rather fine!" cried the count, with evident pleasure. "A meeting of pirates is all we need to make it perfect. It is a pity that we cannot see where we are!"

"Light a match. Have you any?" said the baroness.

"I have, and wax matches, too." The count took out a match and lit it, and the underground stream was lit by a faint ruddy glow. The channel, covered by a semicircular arch, was just wide enough for one boat to pass through, with oars out. The black water flowed silently by in a sluggish, Stygian stream. Bats, startled by the light, fluttered in their faces, and then disappeared in the darkness.

As the boat glided on, the match burned out in Count

Kallash's fingers. He threw it into the water, and opened his matchbox to take another.

At the same moment he felt a sharp blow on the head, followed by a second, and he sank senseless in the bottom of the boat.

"Where is the money?" cried Bodlevski, who had struck him with the handle of the oar. "Get his coat open!" and the baroness deftly drew the thick packet from the breast pocket of his coat. "Here it is! I have it!" she replied quickly.

"Now, overboard with him! Keep the body steady!" A dull splash, and then silence. "To-night we shall sleep secure!"

They counted without their host. Princess Anna had also her scheme of vengeance, and had worked it out, without a word to her brother. When Natasha and Bodlevski entered their apartment, they found the police in possession, and a few minutes later both were under arrest. Abundant evidence of fraud and forgery was found in their dwelling, and the vast Siberian solitudes avenged the death of their last victim.

Jörgen Wilhelm Bergsöe

The Amputated Arms

IT happened when I was about eighteen or nineteen years old (began Dr. Simsen). I was studying at the University, and being coached in anatomy by my old friend Sölling. He was an amusing fellow, this Sölling. Full of jokes and whimsical ideas, and equally merry, whether he was working at the dissecting table or brewing a punch for a jovial crowd.

He had but one fault—if one might call it so—and that was his exaggerated idea of punctuality. He grumbled if you were late two minutes; any longer delay would spoil the entire evening for him. He himself was never known to be late. At least not during the entire years of my studying.

One Wednesday evening our little circle of friends met as usual in my room at seven o'clock. I had made the customary preparations for the meeting, had borrowed three chairs—I had but one myself—had cleaned all my pipes, and had persuaded Hans to take the breakfast dishes from the sofa and carry them downstairs. One by one my friends arrived, the clock struck seven, and to our great astonishment, Sölling had not yet appeared. One, two, even five minutes passed before we heard him run upstairs and knock at the door with his characteristic short blows.

When he entered the room he looked so angry and at the same time so upset that I cried out: "What's the matter, Sölling? You look as if you had been robbed."

"That's exactly what has happened," replied Sölling angrily. "But it was no ordinary sneak thief," he added, hanging his overcoat behind the door.

"What have you lost?" asked my neighbor Nansen.

"Both arms from the new skeleton I've just recently received from the hospital," said Sölling with an expression as if his last cent had been taken from him. "It's vandalism!"

We burst out into loud laughter at this remarkable answer, but Sölling continued: "Can you imagine it? Both arms are gone, cut off at the shoulder joint;—and the strangest part of it is that the same thing has been done to my shabby old skeleton which stands in my bedroom. There wasn't an arm on either of them."

"That's too bad," I remarked. "For we were just going to study the *anatomy* of the arm to-night."

"Osteology," corrected Sölling gravely. "Get out your skeleton, little Simsen. It isn't as good as mine, but it will do for this evening."

I went to the corner where my anatomical treasures were hidden behind a green curtain—"the Museum," was what Sölling called it—but my astonishment was great when I found my skeleton in its accustomed place and wearing as usual my student's uniform—but without arms.

"The devil!" cried Sölling. "That was done by the same person who robbed me; the arms are taken off at the shoulder joint in exactly the same manner. You did it, Simsen!"

I declared my innocence, very angry at the abuse of my fine skeleton, while Nansen cried: "Wait a moment, I'll bring in mine. There hasn't been a soul in my room since this morning, I can swear to that. I'll be back in an instant."

He hurried into his room, but returned in a few moments greatly depressed and somewhat ashamed. The skeleton was in its usual place, but the arms were gone, cut off at the shoulder in exactly the same manner as mine.

The affair, mysterious in itself, had now come to be a serious matter. We lost ourselves in suggestions and explanations, none of which seemed to throw any light on the subject. Finally we sent a messenger to the other side of the house where, as I happened to know, was a new skele-

ton which the young student Ravn had recently received from the janitor of the hospital.

Ravn had gone out and taken the key with him. The messenger whom we had sent to the rooms of the Iceland students returned with the information that one of them had used the only skeleton they possessed to pummel the other with, and that consequently only the thigh bones were left unbroken.

What were we to do? We couldn't understand the matter at all. Sölling scolded and cursed and the company was about to break up when we heard some one coming noisily upstairs. The door was thrown open and a tall, thin figure appeared on the threshold—our good friend Niels Daae.

He was a strange chap, this Niels Daae, the true type of a species seldom found nowadays. He was no longer young, and by reason of a queer chain of circumstances, as he expressed it, he had been through nearly all the professions and could produce papers proving that he had been on the point of passing not one but three examinations.

He had begun with theology; but the story of the quarrel between Jacob and Esau had led him to take up the study of law. As a law student he had come across an interesting poisoning case, which had proved to him that a study of medicine was extremely necessary for lawyers; and he had taken up the study of medicine with such energy that he had forgotten all his law and was about to take his last examinations at the age of forty.

Niels Daae took the story of our troubles very seriously. "Every pot has two handles," he began. "Every sausage two ends, every question two sides, except this one—this has three." (Applause.) "When we look at it from the legal point of view there can be no doubt that it belongs in the category of ordinary theft. But from the fact that the thief took only the arms when he might have taken the entire skeleton, we must conclude that he is not in a responsible condition of mind, which therefore introduces a medical side to the affair. From a legal point of view, the thief

must be convicted for robbery, or at least for the illegal appropriation of the property of others; but from the medical point of view, we must acquit him, because he is not responsible for his acts. Here we have two professions quarreling with one another, and who shall say which is right? But now I will introduce the theological point of view, and raise the entire affair up to a higher plane. Providence, in the material shape of a patron of mine in the country, whose children I have inoculated with the juice of wisdom, has sent me two fat geese and two first-class ducks. These animals are to be cooked and eaten this evening in Mathiesen's establishment, and I invite this honored company to join me there. Personally I look upon the disappearance of these arms as an all-wise intervention of Providence, which sets its own inscrutable wisdom up against the wisdom which we would otherwise have heard from the lips of my venerable friend Sölling."

Daae's confused speech was received with laughter and applause, and Sölling's weak protests were lost in the general delight at the invitation. I have often noticed that such improvised festivities are usually the most enjoyable, and so it was for us that evening. Niels Daae treated us to his ducks and to his most amusing jokes, Sölling sang his best songs, our jovial host Mathiesen told his wittiest stories, and the merriment was in full swing when we heard cries in the street, and then a rush of confused noises broken by screams of pain.

"There's been an accident," cried Sölling, running out to the door.

We all followed him and discovered that a pair of runaway horses had thrown a carriage against a tree, hurling the driver from his box, under the wheels. His right arm had been broken near the shoulder. In the twinkling of an eye the hall of festivities was transformed into an emergency hospital. Sölling shook his head as he examined the injury, and ordered the transport of the patient to the city hospital. It was his belief that the arm would have to be amputated, cut off at the shoulder joint, just as had been

the case with our skeleton. "Damned odd coincidence, isn't it?" he remarked to me.

Our merry mood had vanished and we took our way, quiet and depressed, through the old avenues toward our home. For the first time in its existence possibly, our venerable "barracks," as we called the dormitory, saw its occupants returning home from an evening's bout just as the night watchman intoned his eleven o'clock verse.

"Just eleven," exclaimed Sölling. "It's too early to go to bed, and too late to go anywhere else. We'll go up to your room, little Simsen, and see if we can't have some sort of a lesson this evening. You have your colored plates and we'll try to get along with them. It's a nuisance that we should have lost those arms just this evening."

"The Doctor can have all the arms and legs he wants," grinned Hans, who came out of the doorway just in time to hear Sölling's last word.

"What do you mean, Hans?" asked Sölling in astonishment.

"It'll be easy enough to get them," said Hans. "They've torn down the planking around the Holy Trinity churchyard, and dug up the earth to build a new wall. I saw it myself, as I came past the church. Lord, what a lot of bones they've dug out there! There's arms and legs and heads, many more than the Doctor could possibly need."

"Much good that does us," answered Sölling. "They shut the gates at seven o'clock and it's after eleven already."

"Oh, yes, they shut them," grinned Hans again. "But there's another way to get in. If you go through the gate of the porcelain factory and over the courtyard, and through the mill in the fourth courtyard that leads out into Spring Street, there you will see where the planking is torn down, and you can get into the churchyard easily."

"Hans, you're a genius!" exclaimed Sölling in delight. "Here, Simsen, you know that factory inside and out, you're so friendly with that fellow Outzen who lives there. Run along to him and let him give you the key of the mill.

It will be easy to find an arm that isn't too much decayed. Hurry along, now; the rest of us will wait for you upstairs."

To be quite candid I must confess that I was not particularly eager to fulfill Sölling's command. I was at an age to have still a sufficient amount of reverence for death and the grave, and the mysterious occurrence of the stolen arms still ran through my mind. But I was still more afraid of Sölling's irony and of the laughter of my comrades, so I trotted off as carelessly as if I had been sent to buy a package of cigarettes.

It was some time before I could arouse the old janitor of the factory from his peaceful slumbers. I told him that I had an important message for Outzen, and hurried upstairs to the latter's room. Outzen was a strictly moral character; knowing this, I was prepared to have him refuse me the key which would let me into the fourth courtyard and from there into the cemetery. As I expected, Outzen took the matter very seriously. He closed the Hebrew Bible which he had been studying as I entered, turned up his lamp and looked at me in astonishment as I made my request.

"Why, my dear Simsen, it is a most sinful deed that you are about to do," he said gravely. "Take my advice and desist. You will get no key from me for any such cause. The peace of the grave is sacred. No man dare disturb it."

"And how about the gravedigger? He puts the newly dead down beside the old corpses, and lives as peacefully as anyone else."

"He is doing his duty," answered Outzen calmly. "But to disturb the peace of the grave from sheer daring, with the fumes of the punch still in your head,—that is a different matter,—that will surely be punished!"

His words irritated me. It is not very flattering, particularly if one is not yet twenty, to be told that you are about to perform a daring deed simply because you are drunk. Without any further reply to his protests I took the key from its place on the wall and ran downstairs two

steps at a time, vowing to myself that I would take home an arm let cost what it would. I would show Outzen, and Sölling, and all the rest, what a devil of a fellow I was.

My heart beat rapidly as I stole through the long dark corridor, past the ruins of the old convent of St. Clara, into the so-called third courtyard. Here I took a lantern from the hall, lit it and crossed to the mill where the clay was prepared for the factory. The tall wheels and cylinders, with their straps and bolts, looked like weird creatures of the night in the dim light of my tallow candle. I felt my courage sinking even here, but I pulled myself together, opened the last door with my key and stepped out into the fourth courtyard. A moment later I stood on the dividing line between the cemetery and the factory.

The entire length of the tall blackened planking had been torn down. The pieces of it lay about, and the earth had been dug up to considerable depth, to make a foundation for a new wall between Life and Death. The uncanny emptiness of the place seized upon me. I halted involuntarily as if to harden myself against it. It was a raw, cold, stormy evening. The clouds flew past the moon in jagged fragments, so that the churchyard, with its white crosses and stones, lay now in full light, now in dim shadow. Now and then a rush of wind rattled over the graves, roared through the leafless trees, bent the complaining bushes, and caught itself in the little eddy at the corner of the church, only to escape again over the roofs, turning the old weather vane with a sharp scream of the rusty iron.

I looked toward the left—there I saw several weird white shapes moving gently in the moonlight. "White sheets," I said to myself, "it's nothing but white sheets! This drying of linen in the churchyard ought to be stopped."

I turned in the opposite direction and saw a heap of bones scarce two paces distant from me. Holding my lantern lower, I approached them and stretched out my

hand—there was a rattling in the heap; something warm and soft touched my fingers.

I started and shivered. Then I exclaimed: "The rats! nothing but the rats in the churchyard! I must not get frightened. It will be so foolish—they would laugh at me. Where the devil is that arm? I can't find one that isn't broken!"

With trembling knees and in feverish haste I examined one heap after another. The light in my lantern flickered in the wind and suddenly went out. The foul smell of the smoking wick rose to my face and I felt as if I were about to faint. It took all my energy to recover my control. I walked two or three steps ahead, and saw at a little distance a coffin which had been still in good shape when taken out of the earth.

I approached it and saw that it was of old-fashioned shape, made of heavy oaken boards that were already rotting. On its cover was a metal plate with an illegible inscription. The old wood was so brittle that it would have been very easy for me to open the coffin with any sort of a tool. I looked about me and saw a hatchet and a couple of spades lying near the fence. I took one of the latter, put its flat end between the boards—the old coffin fell apart with a dull crackling protest.

I turned my head aside, put my hand in through the opening, felt about, and taking a firm hold on one arm of the skeleton, I loosened it from the body with a quick jerk. The movement loosened the head as well, and it rolled out through the opening right to my very feet. I took up the skull to lay it in the coffin again—and then I saw a greenish phosphorescent glimmer in its empty eye sockets, a glimmer which came and went. Mad terror shook me at the sight. I looked up at the houses in the distance, then back again to the skull; the empty sockets shone more brightly than before. I felt that I must have some natural explanation for this appearance or I would go mad. I took up the head again—and never in my life have I had so overpowering an impression of the

might of death and decay than in this moment. Myriads of disgusting clammy insects poured out of every opening of the skull, and a couple of shining, wormlike centipedes—*Geophiles*, the scientists call them—crawled about in the eye sockets. I threw the skull back into the coffin, sprang over the heaps of bones without even taking time to pick up my lantern, and ran like a hunted thing through the dark mill, over the factory courtyards, until I reached the outer gate. Here I washed the arm at the fountain, and smoothed my disarranged clothing. I hid my booty under my overcoat, nodded to the sleepy old janitor as he opened the door to me, and a few moments later I entered my own room with an expression which I had attempted to make quite calm and careless.

"What the devil is the matter with you, Simsen?" cried Sölling as he saw me. "Have you seen a ghost? Or is the punch wearing off already? We thought you'd never come; why, it's nearly twelve o'clock!"

Without a word I drew back my overcoat and laid my booty on the table.

"By all the devils," exclaimed Sölling in anatomical enthusiasm, "where did you find that superb arm? Simsen knows what he's about all right. It's a girl's arm; isn't it beautiful? Just look at the hand—how fine and delicate it is! Must have worn a No. 6 glove. There's a pretty hand to caress and kiss!"

The arm passed from one to the other amid general admiration. Every word that was said increased my disgust for myself and for what I had done. It was a woman's arm, then—what sort of a woman might she have been? Young and beautiful possibly—her brothers' pride, her parents' joy. She had faded away in her youth, cared for by loving hands and tender thoughts. She had fallen asleep gently, and those who loved her had desired to give her in death the peace she had enjoyed throughout her lifetime. For this they had made her coffin of thick, heavy oaken boards. And this hand, loved and missed by so many—it lay there now on an anatomical table, en-

circled by clouds of tobacco smoke, stared at by curious glances, and made the object of coarse jokes. O God! how terrible it was!

"I must have that arm," exclaimed Sölling, when the first burst of admiration had passed. "When I bleach it and touch it up with varnish, it will be a superb specimen. I'll take it home with me."

"No," I exclaimed, "I can't permit it. It was wrong of me to bring it away from the churchyard. I'm going right back to put the arm in its place."

"Well, will you listen to that?" cried Sölling, amid the hearty laughter of the others. "Simsen's so lyric, he certainly must be drunk. I must have that arm at any cost."

"Not much," cut in Niels Daae; "you have no right to it. It was buried in the earth and dug out again; it is a find, and all the rest of us have just as much right to it as you have."

"Yes, everyone of us has some share in it," said some one else.

"But what are you going to do about it?" remarked Sölling. "It would be vandalism to break up that arm. What God has joined together let no man put asunder," he concluded with pathos.

"Let's auction it off," exclaimed Daae. "I will be the auctioneer, and this key to the graveyard will serve me for a hammer."

The laughter broke out anew as Daae took his place solemnly at the head of the table and began to whine out the following announcement: "I hereby notify all present that on the 25th of November, at twelve o'clock at midnight, in corridor No. 5 of the student barracks, a lady's arm in excellent condition, with all its appurtenances of wrist bones, joints, and finger tips, is to be offered at public auction. The buyer can have possession of his purchase immediately after the auction, and a credit of six weeks will be given to any reliable customer. I bid a Danish shilling."

"One mark," cried Sölling mockingly.

"Two," cried somebody else.

"Four," exclaimed Sölling. "It's worth it. Why don't you join in, Simsen? You look as if you were sitting in a hornet's nest."

I bid one mark more, and Sölling raised me a thaler. There were no more bids, the hammer fell, and the arm belonged to Sölling.

"Here, take this," he said, handing me a mark piece; "it's part of your commission as grave robber. You shall have the rest later, unless you prefer that I should turn it over to the drinking fund." With these words Sölling wrapped the arm in a newspaper, and the gay crowd ran noisily down the stairs and through the streets, until their singing and laughter were lost in the distance.

I stood alone, still dazed and bewildered, staring at the piece of money in my hand. My thoughts were far too much excited that I should hope to sleep. I turned up my lamp and took out one of my books to try and study myself into a quieter mood. But without success.

Suddenly I heard a sound like that of a swinging pendulum. I raised my head and listened attentively. There was no clock either in my room or in the neighboring ones—but I could still hear the sound. At the same moment my lamp began to flicker. The oil was apparently exhausted. I was about to rise to fill it again, when my eyes fell upon the door, and I saw the graveyard key, which I had hung there, moving slowly back and forth with a rhythmic swing. Just as its motion seemed about to die away, it would receive a gentle push as from an unseen hand, and would swing back and forth more than ever. I stood there with open mouth and staring eyes, ice-cold chills ran down my back, and drops of perspiration stood out on my forehead. Finally, I could endure it no longer. I sprang to the door, seized the key with both hands and put it on my desk under a pile of heavy books. Then I breathed a sigh of relief.

My lamp was about to go out and I discovered that I had no more oil. With feverish haste I threw my clothes

off, blew out the light and sprang into bed as if to smother my fears.

But once alone in the darkness the fears grew worse than ever. They grew into dreams and visions. It seemed to me as if I were out in the graveyard again, and heard the screaming of the rusty weather vane as the wind turned it. Then I was in the mill again; the wheels were turning and stretching out ghostly hands to draw me into the yawning maw of the machine. Then again, I found myself in a long, low, pitch-black corridor, followed by Something I could not see—Something that drove me to the mouth of a bottomless abyss. I would start up out of my half sleep, listen and look about me, then fall back again into an uneasy slumber.

Suddenly something fell from the ceiling onto the bed, and "buzz—buzz—buzz" sounded about my head. It was a huge fly which had been sleeping in a corner of my room and had been roused by the heat of the stove. It flew about in great circles, now around the bed, now in all four corners of the chamber—"buzz—buzz—buzz"—it was unendurable! At last I heard it creep into a bag of sugar which had been left on the window sill. I sprang up and closed the bag tight. The fly buzzed worse than ever, but I went back to bed and attempted to sleep again, feeling that I had conquered the enemy.

I began to count: I counted slowly to one hundred, two hundred, finally up to one thousand, and then at last I experienced that pleasant weakness which is the forerunner of true sleep. I seemed to be in a beautiful garden, bright with many flowers and odorous with all the perfumes of spring. At my side walked a beautiful young girl. I seemed to know her well, and yet it was not possible for me to remember her name, or even to know how we came to be wandering there together. As we walked slowly through the paths she would stop to pick a flower or to admire a brilliant butterfly swaying in the air. Suddenly a cold wind blew through the garden. The young girl trembled and her cheeks grew pale. "I am cold," she said

to me, "do you not see? It is Death who is approaching us."

I would have answered, but in the same moment another stronger and still more icy gust roared through the garden. The leaves turned pale on the trees, the flowerets bent their heads, and the bees and butterflies fell lifeless to the earth. "That is Death," whispered my companion, trembling.

A third icy gust blew the last leaves from the bushes, white crosses and gravestones appeared between the bare twigs—and I was in the churchyard again and heard the screaming of the rusty weather vane. Beside me stood a heavy brass-bound coffin with a metal plate on the cover. I bent down to read the inscription, the cover rolled off suddenly, and from out the coffin rose the form of the young girl who had been with me in the garden. I stretched out my arms to clasp her to my breast—then, oh horror! I saw the greenish-gleaming, empty eye sockets of the skull. I felt bony arms around me, dragging me back into the coffin. I screamed aloud for help and woke up.

My room seemed unusually light; but I remembered that it was a moonlight night and thought no more of it. I tried to explain the visions of my dream with various natural noises about me. The imprisoned fly buzzed as loudly as a whole swarm of bees; one half of my window had blown open, and the cold night air rushed in gusts into my room.

I sprang up to close the window, and then I saw that the strong white light that filled my room did not come from the moon, but seemed to shine out from the church opposite. I heard the chiming of the bells, soft at first, as if in far distance, then stronger and stronger until, mingled with the rolling notes of the organ, a mighty rush of sound struck against my windows. I stared out into the street and could scarcely believe my eyes. The houses in the market place just beyond were all little one-story buildings with bow windows and wooden eave troughs ending in carved dragon heads. Most of them had balconies of

carved woodwork, and high stone stoops with gleaming brass rails.

But it was the church most of all that aroused my astonishment. Its position was completely changed. Its front turned toward our house where usually the side had stood. The church was brilliantly lighted, and now I perceived that it was this light which filled my room. I stood speechless amid the chiming of the bells and the roaring of the organ, and I saw a long wedding procession moving slowly up the center aisle of the church toward the altar. The light was so brilliant that I could distinguish each one of the figures. They were all in strange old-time costumes; the ladies in brocades and satins with strings of pearls in their powdered hair, the gentlemen in uniform with knee breeches, swords, and cocked hats held under their arms. But it was the bride who drew my attention most strongly. She was clothed in white satin, and a faded myrtle wreath was twisted through the powdered locks beneath her sweeping veil. The bridegroom at her side wore a red uniform and many decorations. Slowly they approached the altar, where an old man in black vestments and a heavy white wig was awaiting them. They stood before him, and I could see that he was reading the ritual from a gold-lettered book.

One of the train stepped forward and unbuckled the bridegroom's sword, that his right hand might be free to take that of the bride. She seemed about to raise her own hand to his, when she suddenly sank fainting at his feet. The guests hurried toward the altar, the lights went out, the music stopped, and the figures floated together like pale white mists.

But outside in the square it was still brighter than before, and I suddenly saw the side portal of the church burst open and the wedding procession move out across the market place.

I turned as if to flee, but could not move a muscle. Quiet, as if turned to stone, I stood and watched the ghostly figures that came nearer and nearer. The clergyman led

the train, then came the bridegroom and the bride, and as the latter raised her eyes to me I saw that it was the young girl of the garden. Her eyes were so full of pain, so full of sad entreaty that I could scarce endure them; but how shall I explain the feeling that shot through me as I suddenly discovered that the right sleeve of her white satin gown hung empty at her side? The train disappeared, and the tone of the church bells changed to a strange, dry, creaking sound, and the gate below me complained as it turned on its rusty hinges. I faced toward my own door. I knew that it was shut and locked, but I knew that the ghostly procession were coming to call me to account, and I felt that no walls could keep them out. My door flew open, there was a rustling as of silken gowns, but the figures seemed to float in in the changing forms of swaying white mists. Closer and closer they gathered around me, robbing me of breath, robbing me of the power to move. There was a silence as of the grave—and then I saw before me the old priest with his gold-lettered book. He raised his hand and spoke with a soft, deep voice: "The grave is sacred! Let no one dare to disturb the peace of the dead."

"The grave is sacred!" an echo rolled through the room as the swaying figures moved like reeds in the wind.

"What do you want? What do you demand?" I gasped in the grip of a deathly fear.

"Give back to the grave that which belongs to it," said the deep voice again.

"Give back to the grave that which belongs to it," repeated the echo as the swaying forms pressed closer to me.

"But it's impossible—I can't—I have sold it—sold it at auction!" I screamed in despair. "It was buried and found in the earth—and sold for five marks eight shillings——"

A hideous scream came from the ghostly ranks. They threw themselves upon me as the white fog rolls in from the sea, they pressed upon me until I could no longer breathe. Beside myself, I threw open the window and at-

tempted to spring out, screaming aloud: "Help! help! murder! they are murdering me!"

The sound of my own voice awoke me. I found myself in my night clothes on the window sill, one leg already out of the window and both hands clutching at the center post. On the street below me stood the night watchman, staring up at me in astonishment, while faint white clouds of mist rolled out of my window like smoke. All around outside lay the November fog, gray and moist, and as the fresh air of the early dawn blew cool on my face I felt my senses returning to me. I looked down at the night watchman—God bless him! He was a big, strong, comfortably fat fellow made of real flesh and blood, and no ghost shape of the night. I looked at the round tower of the church—how massive and venerable it stood there, gray in the gray of the morning mists. I looked over at the market place. There was a light in the baker shop and a farmer stood before it, tying his horse to a post. Back in my own room everything was in its usual place. Even the little paper bag with the sugar lay there on the window sill, and the imprisoned fly buzzed louder than ever. I knew that I was really awake and that the day was coming. I sprang back hastily from the window and was about to jump into bed, when my foot touched something hard and sharp.

I stooped to see what it was, felt about on the floor in the half light, and touched a long, dry, skeleton arm which held a tiny roll of paper in its bony fingers. I felt about again, and found still another arm, also holding a roll of paper. Then I began to think that my reason must be going. What I had seen thus far was only an unusually vivid dream—a vision of my heated imagination. But I knew that I was awake now, and yet here lay two—no, three (for there was still another arm)—hard, undeniable, material proofs that what I had thought was hallucination, might have been reality. Trembling in the thought that madness was threatening me, I tore open the first roll of paper. On it was written the name: "Sölling." I caught at the second and opened it. There stood the word: "Nan-

sen." I had just strength enough left to catch the third paper and open it—there was my own name: "Simsen."

Then I sank fainting to the floor.

When I came to myself again, Niels Daae stood beside me with an empty water bottle, the contents of which were dripping off my person and off the sofa upon which I was lying. "Here, drink this," he said in a soothing tone. "It will make you feel better."

I looked about me wildly, as I sipped at the glass of brandy which put new life into me once more. "What has happened?" I asked weakly.

"Oh, nothing of importance," answered Niels. "You were just about to commit suicide by means of charcoal gas. Those are mighty bad ventilators on your old stove there. The wind must have blown them shut, unless you were fool enough to close them yourself before you went to bed. If you had not opened the window, you would have already been too far along the path to Paradise to be called back by a glass of brandy. Take another."

"How did you get up here?" I asked, sitting upright on the sofa.

"Through the door in the usual simple manner," answered Niels Daae. "I was on watch last night in the hospital; but Mathiesen's punch is heavy and my watching was more like sleeping, so I thought it better to come away in the early morning. As I passed your barracks here, I saw you sitting in the window in your nightshirt and calling down to the night watchman that some one was murdering you. I managed to wake up Jansen down below you, and got into the house through his window. Do you usually sleep on the bare floor?"

"But where did the arms come from?" I asked, still half bewildered.

"Oh, the devil take those arms," cried Niels. "Just see if you can stand up all right now. Oh, those arms there? Why, those are the arms I cut off your skeletons. Clever idea, wasn't it? You know how grumpy Sölling gets if anything interferes with his tutoring. You see, I'd

had the geese sent me, and I wanted you to all come with me to Mathiesen's place. I knew you were going to read the osteology of the arm, so I went up into Sölling's room, opened it with his own keys and took the arms from his skeleton. I did the same here while you were downstairs in the reading room. Have you been stupid enough to take them down off their frames, and take away their tickets? I had marked them so carefully, that each man should get his own again."

I dressed hastily and went out with Niels into the fresh, cool morning air. A few minutes later we separated, and I turned toward the street where Sölling lived. Without heeding the protest of his old landlady, I entered the room where he still slept the sleep of the just. The arm, still wrapped in newspaper, lay on his desk. I took it up, put the mark piece in its place and hastened with all speed to the churchyard.

How different it looked in the early dawn! The fog had risen and shining frost pearls hung in the bare twigs of the tall trees where the sparrows were already twittering their morning song. There was no one to be seen. The churchyard lay quiet and peaceful. I stepped over the heaps of bones to where the heavy oaken coffin lay under a tree. Cautiously I pushed the arm back into its interior, and hammered the rusty nails into their places again, just as the first rays of the pale November sun touched a gleam of light from the metal plate on the cover.—Then the weight was lifted from my soul.

Otto Larssen

The Manuscript

TWO gentlemen sat chatting together one evening.

Their daily business was to occupy themselves with literature. At the present moment they were engaged in drinking whisky,—an occupation both agreeable and useful,—and in chatting about books, the theater, women and many other things. Finally they came around to that inexhaustible subject for conversation, the mysterious life of the soul, the hidden things, the Unknown, that theme for which Shakespeare has given us an oft-quoted and oft-abused device, which one of the men, Mr. X., now used to point his remarks. Raising his glass, he looked at himself meditatively in a mirror opposite, and, in a good imitation of the manner of his favorite actor, he quoted:

"There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in thy philosophy, Horatio."

Mr. Y. arranged a fresh glass for himself, and answered:

"I believe it. I believe also that it is given but to a few chosen ones to see these things. It never fell to my lot, I know. Fortunately for me, perhaps. For,—at least so it appears to me,—these chosen ones appear on closer investigation to be individuals of an abnormal condition of brain. As far as I personally am concerned, I know of nothing more strange than the usual logical and natural sequence of events on our globe. I confess things do sometimes happen outside of this orderly sequence; but for the cold-blooded and thoughtful person the Strange, the apparently Inexplicable, usually turns out to be a sum of Chance, that Chance we will never be quite clever enough to fully take into our calculations.

"As an instance I would like to tell you the story of

what happened several years back to a friend of mine, a young French writer. He had a good, sincere mind, but he had also a strong leaning toward mysticism,—something which was just then in danger of becoming as much of a fashion in France as it is here now. The event of which I am about to tell you threw him into what was almost a delirium, which came near to robbing him of his normal intelligence, and therefore came near to robbing French readers of a few excellent books.

"This was the way it happened:

"It was about ten years back, and I was spending the spring and summer in Paris. I had a room with the family of a *concierge* on the left bank, rue de Vaugirard, near the Luxembourg Gardens.

"A few steps from my modest domicile lived my friend Lucien F. We had become acquainted through a chain of circumstances which do not belong to this story, but these circumstances had made firm friends of us, a friendship which was a source of great pleasure and also of assistance to me in my study of Paris conditions. This friendship also enabled me to enjoy better and cheaper whisky than one can usually meet with in the city by the Seine, a real good 'Jameson Highland.'

"Lucien F. had already published several books which had aroused attention through the oddity of their themes, and their gratifying success had made it possible for him to establish himself in a comfortably furnished bachelor apartment on the corner of the rue de Vaugirard and the rue de Condé.

"The apartment had a corridor and three rooms; a dining room, a bedroom, and a charming study with an inclosed balcony, the three windows of which,—a large one in the center and two smaller ones at the side,—sent a flood of light in over the great writing table which filled nearly the entire balcony. Inside the room, near the balcony, stood a divan covered with a bearskin rug. Upon this divan I spent many of my hours in Paris, occupied in the smoking of my friend's excellent cigars, and the sampling of his

superlatively good whisky. At the same time I could lie staring up at the tops of the trees in the Luxembourg Gardens, while Lucien worked at his desk. For, unlike most writers, he could work best when he was not alone.

" If I remained away several days, he would invariably ring my bell early some morning, and drag me out of bed with the remark: ' The whisky is ready. I can't write if you are not there.'

" During the particular days of which I shall tell you, he was engaged in the writing of a fantastic novelette, ' The Force of the Wind,' a work which interested him greatly, and which he would interrupt unwillingly at intervals to furnish copy for the well-known newspaper that numbered him among the members of its staff. His books were printed by the same house that did the printing for the paper.

" Often, as I lay in my favorite position on the divan, the bell would ring and we would be honored by a visit from the printer's boy Adolphe, a little fellow in a blue blouse, the true type of Paris gamin. Adolphe rejoiced in a broken nose, a pair of crafty eyes, and had his fists always full of manuscripts which he treated with a carelessness that would have driven a literary novice to despair. The long rolls of yellow paper would hang out of his trousers pockets as if ready to fall apart at his next movement. And the disrespectful manner in which he crammed my friend Lucien's scarcely dried essay into the breast of his blouse would have certainly called forth remarks from a journalist of more self-conceit.

" But his eyes were so full of sly cunning, and there was such an atmosphere of Paris about the stocky little fourteen-year-old chap, that we would often keep him longer with us, and treat him to a glass of anisette to hear his opinion of the writers whose work he handled. He was an amusing cross between a tricky little Paris gamin and a real child, and he hit off the characteristics of the various writers with as keen a touch of actuality as he could put into his stories of how many centimes he had won that morning at ' craps ' from his friend Pierre. Pierre was another employee of the

printing house, Adolphe's comrade in his study of the mysteries of Paris streets, and now his rival. They were both in love with the same girl, the fifteen-year-old daughter of the keeper of 'La Prunelle' Café, and her favor was often the prize of the morning's game.

"Now and then this rivalry between the two young Parisians would drop into a hand-to-hand fight. I myself was witness to such a skirmish one day, in front of 'La Prunelle.' The rivals pulled each other's hair mightily while the manuscripts flew about over the pavement, and Virginie, in her short skirts, stood at the door of the café and laughed until she seemed about to shake to pieces.

"Pierre was the strongest, and Adolphe came off with a bloody nose. He gathered up his manuscripts in grim silence and left the battlefield and the still laughing Virginie with an expression of deep anger on his wounded face.

"The following day, when I teased him a little because of his defeat, he smiled a sly smile and remarked:

"'Yes, but I won a franc from him, the big stupid animal. And so it was I, after all, who took Virginie out that evening. We went to the Café "Néant," where I let them put me in the coffin and pretend to be decaying, to amuse her. She thought it was lots of fun.'

"One morning Lucien had come for me as usual, put me on the divan, and seated himself at his writing table. He was just putting the last words to his novel, and the table was entirely covered with the scattered leaves, closely written. I could just see his neck as he sat there, a thin-sinewed, expressive neck. He bent over his work, blind and deaf for anything else. I lay there and gazed out over the tops of the trees in the park up into the blue summer sky. The window on the left side of the desk stood wide open, for it was a warm and sultry day. I sipped my whisky slowly. The air was heavy, and thunder threatened in the distance. After a little while the clouds gathered together, heavy, low-hanging, copper-hued, real thunder clouds, and the trees in the park rustled softly. The air was stifling, and lay heavy as lead on my breast.

"'Lucien!'

"Lucien did not hear or see anything, his pen flew over the paper.

"I fell back lazily on my divan.

"Then, suddenly, there was a mighty tumult. A strong gust of wind swept through the street, bending the trees in the gardens quite out of my horizon. With a crash the right-hand window in the balcony flew wide open, and like a cyclone, the wind swept through, clearing the table in an instant of all the loose sheets of paper that had lain scattered about it.

"'The devil! Why don't you shut the window!' I cried, springing up from the sofa.

"'Spare your energy, it's too late,' said Lucien with a gentle mockery in his soft voice. 'Look there!'—he pointed out into the street, where his sheets of paper went swirling about in the heavy air like white doves.

"A second later came the rain, a veritable cloud-burst. We shut the windows and gave ourselves up to melancholy thoughts about the lost manuscript, the recovery of which now seemed utterly hopeless.

"'That's one thousand francs, at least, that the wind has robbed me of,' sighed Lucien. 'Well, *enfin*, that doesn't matter so much. But do you know anything more tiresome than to work over the same subject a second time? I can't think of doing it. It would fairly make me sick to try it.'

"We were in a sad mood that morning. When we went out to breakfast at about two o'clock, we looked about for some traces of the lost manuscript.

"There was nothing to be seen. It had vanished completely, whirled off to all four corners of the earth probably, this manuscript from which Lucien had expected so much. Truly it was 'The Force of the Wind.'

. . . . .

"Now comes the strange part of the story. One morning, two weeks later, Lucien stood in the door of my little room, pale as a ghost. He had a bundle of printer's proofs in his hand, and held them out to me without a word.

"I looked at it and read:

"'"The Force of the Wind," by Lucien F.'

"It was a good bundle of proofs, the entire first proofs of Lucien's novel, that novel the manuscript of which we had seen blown out of the balcony window and whirled away by the winds.

"'My dear man,' I exclaimed, as I handed him back the proofs. 'You *have* been industrious indeed, to write your entire novel over again in so short a time—and to have proofs already——'

"Lucien did not answer. He stood silent, staring at me with a weird look in his otherwise so sensible eyes. After a moment he stammered:

"'I did not write the novel over again. I have not touched a pen since the day the manuscript blew out of the window.'

"'Are you a sleep-walker, Lucien?'

"'Why do you ask?'

"'Why, that would be the only natural explanation. They say we can do a great many things in sleep, of which we know nothing when we wake. I've heard queer stories of that. Men have committed murders in their sleep. It happens quite often that sleep-walkers write letters in a handwriting they do not recognize when awake.'

"'I have never been a sleep-walker,' answered Lucien.

"'Oh, you never can tell,' I remarked. 'Would you rather explain it as magic? Or as the work of fairies? Or do you believe in ghosts? Your muse has fascinated you, you mystic!' And I laughed and trilled a line from 'The Mascot,' which we had seen the evening before at the Lyric.

"But my merriment did not seem to strike an answering note in Lucien. He turned from me in silence, and with an offended expression took his hat and his proofs, and—humorist and skeptic as he was ordinarily, he parted from me with the words, uttered in a theatrical tone:

"'There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in thy philosophy.'

" He turned on his heel and left the room.

" To be candid, I was unpleasantly affected by the little scene. I could not for an instant doubt Lucien's honesty,—he was so pale, so frightened almost—so touching in the alarm and excitement of his soul. Of course the only explanation that I could see was that he had written his novel in a sleep-walking state.

" For certainly no printer could set up type from a manuscript that did not exist,—to say nothing of printing it and sending out proofs.

" Several days passed, but Lucien did not come near me. I went to his place once or twice, but the door was locked. Had the devil carried him off bodily? Or had this strange and inexplicable occurrence robbed him of his sanity, and robbed me of his friendship and his excellent whisky?

" After three useless attempts to find him at home, and after writing him a letter which he did not answer, I gave up Lucien without any further attempt to understand his enigmatical behavior. A short time after, I left for my home without having seen or heard anything more of him.

. . . . .

" Months passed. I remained at home, and one evening when, during the course of a gay party, the conversation came around to the subject of mysticism and occult occurrences, I dished up my story of the enigmatical manuscript. The Unknown, the Occult, was the rage just then, and my story was received with great applause and called forth numerous quotations as to ' more things in heaven and earth.' I came to think so much of it myself that I wrote it out and sent it to Professor Flammarion, who was just then making a study of the Unknown, which he preserved in his later book 'L'Inconnu.'

" The occupying myself with the story brought my mind around again to memories of Lucien. One day, I saw a notice in *Le Figaro* to the effect that his book, ' The Force of the Wind,' had appeared in a second large edition, and had aroused much attention, particularly in spiritualistic

circles. I seemed to see him again before me, with his long nervous neck, which was so expressive. The vision of this neck rose up before me whenever I drank the same sort of whisky that I had drunk so often with him, and the longing to hear something more of my lost friend came over me. I sat down one evening when in a sentimental mood, and wrote to him, asking him to tell me something of himself and to send me his book.

"A week later I received the little book and the following letter which I have here in my pocket. It is somewhat crumpled, for I have read it several times. But no matter. I will read it to you now, if you will pardon my awkward translating of the French original.

"Here it is:

"DEAR FRIEND:

"Many thanks for your letter. Here is the book. I have to thank you also that you did not lay my behavior of your last days in Paris up against me. It must have seemed strange to you. I will try to explain it.

"I have been nervous from childhood. The fact that most of my books have treated of fantastic subjects,—somewhat in the manner of Edgar Allan Poe—has made me more susceptible for all that world which lies beyond and about the world of every-day life. I have sought after,—and yet feared—the mystical; cool and lucid as I can be at times, I have always had an inclination for the enigmatical, the Unknown.

"But the first thing that ever happened in my life that I could not explain or understand was the affair of the manuscript. You remember the day I stood in your room? I must have looked the picture of misery. The affair had played more havoc with my nerves than you can very well understand. Your mockery hurt me, and yet under all I felt ashamed of my own thoughts concerning this foolish occurrence. I could not explain the phenomenon, and I shivered at the things that it suggested to me. In this condition, which lasted several weeks, I could not bear to see

you or anyone else, and I was impolite enough even to leave your letter unanswered.

" The book appeared and made a hit, since that sort of thing was the center of interest just then. But almost a month passed before I could arouse myself from that condition of fear and—I had almost said, softening of the brain —which prevented my enjoyment of my success.

" Then the explanation came. Thanks to this occurrence I know now that I shall never again be in danger of being ' haunted.'

" And I know now that Chance can bring about stranger happenings than can any fancied visitations from the spirit world. Here you have the story of this ' mystic ' occurrence, which came near endangering my sanity, and which turns out to be a chance combination of a gust of wind, a sudden downpour of rain, and the strange elements in the character of our little friend Adolphe the printer's boy.

" You remember that funny little chap with the crafty eye, his talent for gambling, and his admiration for the girl of ' La Prunelle ' ? A queer little mixture this child who has himself alone to look to for livelihood and care, the typical race of the Paris streets, the modified gamin from ' Les Miserables.'

" About a month after the appearance of my book I lay on the divan one day,—your favorite place, you remember?—and lost myself in idle reasonings on the same old subject that never left my mind day or night, when the bell rang and Adolphe appeared, to call for the essay on ' Le Boulevarde.' There was an unusually nervous gleam in his eyes that day. I gave him an anisette and tried to find out what his trouble was. I did find it out, and I found out a good deal more besides.

" Thanks to his good fortune as a gambler, Virginie came to look upon him with favor. Pierre was quite out of the race and Adolphe's affection was reciprocated as much as his heart could desire. But with his good fortune in love came all the suffering, all the torture, the suspicions that tear the hearts of us men when we set our hopes upon a

woman's truth. Young as he was he went through them all, and now he was torturing himself with the thought that she did not really love him and was only pretending, while she gave her heart to another. Perhaps he was right—why not?

"I talked to Adolphe as man to man, and managed to bring back a gleam of his usual jollity and sly humor. He took another glass of anisette, and said suddenly:

"'M. Lucien—I did something——'

"'Did what?' I asked.

"'Something I should have told you long ago—it was wrong, and you've always been so nice to me——'

"You remember the day, two months ago, when we had such a sudden wind and rain storm, a regular cloud-burst? I was down here in this neighborhood fetching manuscripts from M. Labouchère and M. Laroy. I was to have come up here for copy from you, too. But then—you'll understand after all I've been telling you,—I came around past 'La Prunelle' and Virginie stood in the doorway, and she'd promised to go out with me that evening. So I ran up to speak to her. And then when I went on again, I saw a sheet with your writing lying in the street. You know I know all the gentlemen's writing, whose copy I fetch. Then I was frightened. I thought to myself, 'The devil,' I thought, 'here I've lost M. Lucien's manuscript.' I couldn't remember calling for it, but I thought I must have done so before I got M. Laroy's. I can't remember much except Virginie these days. I took up the sheet and saw three others a little further on. And I saw a lot more shining just behind the railing of the Luxembourg Garden. You know how hard it rained. The water held the paper down, so the wind couldn't carry it any further. I ran into the Garden and picked up all the sheets, thirty-two of them. All of them, except the first four I found in the street, had blown in behind the railing. And I can tell you I was precious glad that I had them all together. I ran back to the office, told them I had dropped the manuscript in the street, but asked them

not to say anything to you about it. But the sheets were all there,—you always number them so clearly, and 'handsome August,' the compositor, promised he wouldn't tell on me. I knew if the foreman heard of it, he'd put me out, for he had a grudge against me. So nobody knew anything about it. But I thought I ought to tell you, 'cause you've been so nice to me. Maybe you'll understand how one gets queer at times, when a girl like Virginie tells you she likes you better than Pierre, and yet you think she might deceive you for his sake—that big, stupid animal— But now I'll be going. Much obliged for your kindness, M. Lucien, and for the anisette—' And he left me.

"There you have the explanation, the very simple and natural explanation of the phenomenon that almost drove me crazy.

"The entire 'supernatural' occurrence was caused by a careless boy's love affairs, by a gust of southwest wind, by a sudden heavy rain, and by the chance that I had used English ink, the kind that water cannot blur. All these simple natural things made me act so foolishly toward a good friend, the sort of friend I have always known you to be. Let me hear from you, and tell me what you people up North think of my book. I give you my word that the 'Unknown Powers' shall never again make me foolish enough to risk losing your friendship!

"Yours

"LUCIEN."

"So this is my story. Yes, 'there are more things in heaven and earth—' But the workings of Chance are the strangest of all. And this whisky is really very good. Here's to you."

Bernhard Severin Ingemann

The Sealed Room

FOR many years there stood in a side street in Kiel an unpretentious old frame house which had a forbidding, almost sinister appearance, with its old-fashioned balcony and its overhanging upper stories. For the last twenty years the house had been occupied by a greatly respected widow, Madame Wolff, to whom the dwelling had come by inheritance. She lived there quietly with her one daughter, in somewhat straitened circumstances.

What gave the house a mysterious notoriety, augmenting the sinister quality in its appearance, was the fact that one of its rooms, a corner room on the main floor, had not been opened for generations. The door was firmly fastened and sealed with plaster, as well as the window looking out upon the street. Above the door was an old inscription, dated 1603, which threatened sudden death and eternal damnation to any human being who dared to open the door or efface the inscription. Neither door nor window had been opened in the two hundred years that had passed since the inscription was put up. But for a generation back or more, the partition wall and the sealed door had been covered with wall paper, and the inscription had been almost forgotten.

The room adjoining the sealed chamber was a large hall, utilized only for rare important events. Such an occasion arose with the wedding of the only daughter of the house. For that evening the great hall, as it was called, was brilliantly decorated and illuminated for a ball. The building had deep cellars and the old floors were elastic. Madame Wolff had in vain endeavored to avoid using the great hall at all, for the foolish old legend of the sealed chamber

aroused a certain superstitious dread in her heart, and she rarely if ever entered the hall herself. But merry Miss Elizabeth, her pretty young daughter, was passionately fond of dancing, and her mother had promised that she should have a ball on her wedding day. Her betrothed, Secretary Winther, was also a good dancer, and the two young people combated the mother's prejudice against the hall and laughed at her fear of the sealed room. They thought it would be wiser to appear to ignore the stupid legend altogether, and thus to force the world to forget it. In spite of secret misgivings Madame Wolff yielded to their arguments. And for the first time in many years the merry strains of dance music were heard in the great hall that lay next the mysterious sealed chamber.

The bridal couple, as well as the wedding guests, were in the gayest mood, and the ball was an undoubted success. The dancing was interrupted for an hour while supper was served in an adjoining room. After the repast the guests returned to the hall, and it was several hours more before the last dance was called. The season was early autumn and the weather still balmy. The windows had been opened to freshen the air. But the walls retained their dampness and suddenly the dancers noticed that the old wall paper which covered the partition wall between the hall and the sealed chamber had been loosened through the jarring of the building, and had fallen away from the sealed door with its mysterious inscription.

The story of the sealed chamber had been almost forgotten by most of those present, forgotten with many other old legends heard in childhood. The inscription thus suddenly revealed naturally aroused great interest, and there was a general curiosity to know what the mysterious closed room might hide. Conjectures flew from mouth to mouth. Some insisted that the closed door must hide the traces of a hideous murder, or some other equally terrible crime. Others suggested that perhaps the room had been used as a hiding place for garments and other articles belonging to some person who had died of a pestilence, and that

the room had been sealed for fear of spreading the disease. Still others thought that in the sealed chamber there might be found a secret entrance from the cellars, which had made the room available as a hiding place for robbers or smugglers. The guests had quite forgotten their dancing in the interest awakened by the sight of the mysterious door.

"For mercy's sake, don't let's go too near it!" exclaimed some of the young ladies. But the majority thought it would be great fun to see what was hidden there. Most of the men said that they considered it foolish not to have opened the door long ago, and examined the room. The young bridegroom did not join in this opinion, however. He upheld the decision of his mother-in-law not to allow any attempt to effect an entrance into the room. He knew that there was a clause in the title deeds to the house which made the express stipulation that no owner should ever permit the corner room to be opened. There was discussion among the guests as to whether such a clause in a title deed could be binding for several hundred years, and many doubted its validity at any time. But most of them understood why Madame Wolff did not wish any investigation, even should any of those present have sufficient courage to dare the curse and break open the door.

"Nonsense! What great courage is necessary for that?" exclaimed Lieutenant Flemming Wolff, a cousin of the bride of the evening. This gentleman had a reputation that was not of the best. He was known to live mostly on debt and pawn tickets, and was of a most quarrelsome disposition. As a duelist he was feared because of his specialty. This was the ability, and the inclination, through a trick in the use of the foils, to disfigure his opponent's face badly, without at all endangering his life. In this manner he had already sadly mutilated several brave officers and students, who had had the bad luck to stand up against him. He himself was anything but pleasant to look upon, his natural plainness having been rendered repellent by a life of low debauchery. He cherished a secret grudge against the bride-

groom and bitter feelings toward the bride, because the latter had so plainly shown her aversion for him when he had ventured to pay suit to her.

The family had not desired any open break with this disagreeable relative, and had therefore sent him an invitation to the wedding. They had taken it for granted that, under the circumstances, he would prefer to stay away. But he had appeared at the ball, and, perhaps to conceal his resentment, he had been the most indefatigable dancer of the evening. At supper he had partaken freely of the strongest wines, and was plainly showing the effect of them by this time. His eyes rolled wildly, and those who knew him took care not to contradict him, or to have anything to say to him at all.

With a boastful laugh he repeated his assertion that it didn't take much courage to open a sealed door, especially when there might be a fortune concealed behind it. In his opinion it was cowardly to let oneself be frightened by a century-old legend. *He* wouldn't let that bother him if *he* had influence enough in the family to win the daughter and induce the mother to give a ball in the haunted hall. With this last hit he hoped to arouse the young husband's ire. But the latter merely shrugged his shoulders and turned away with a smile of contempt.

Lieutenant Wolff fired up at this, and demanded to know whether the other intended to call his, the lieutenant's, courage into question by his behavior.

"Not in the slightest, when it is a matter of obtaining a loan, or of mutilating an adversary with a trick at fencing," answered the bridegroom angrily, taking care, however, that neither the bride nor any of the other ladies should hear his words. Then he continued in a whisper: "But I don't believe you'd have the courage to remain here alone and in darkness, before this closed door, for a single hour. If you wish to challenge me for this doubt, I am at your disposal as soon as you have proven me in the wrong. But I choose the weapons."

"They must be chosen by lot, sir cousin," replied the lieu-

tenant, his cheek pale and his jaws set. "I will expect you to breakfast to-morrow morning at eight o'clock."

The bridegroom nodded, and took the other's cold dry hand for an instant. The men who had overheard the short conversation looked upon it as a meaningless incident, the memory of which would disappear from the lieutenant's brain with the vanishing wine fumes.

The ball was now over. The bride left the hall with her husband and several of the guests who were to accompany the young couple to their new home. The lights went out in the old house. The door of the dancing hall had been locked from the outside. Lieutenant Flemming Wolff remained alone in the room, having hidden himself in a dark corner where he had not been seen by the servants, who had extinguished the lights and locked the door. The night watchman had just called out two o'clock when the solitary guest found himself, still giddy from the heavy wine, alone in the great dark hall in front of the mysterious door.

The windows were at only a slight elevation from the street, and a spring would take him to safety should his desire to remain there, or to solve the mystery of the sealed room, vanish. But next morning all the windows in the great hall were found closed, just as the servants had left them the night before. The night watchman reported that he had heard a hollow-sounding crash in that unoccupied part of the house during the night. But that was nothing unusual, as there was a general belief in the neighborhood that the house was haunted.

For hollow noises were often heard there, and sounds as of money falling on the floor, and rattling and clinking as of a factory machine. Enlightened people, it is true, explained these sounds as echoes of the stamping and other natural noises from a large stable just behind the old house. But in spite of these explanations and their eminent feasibility, the dread of the unoccupied portion of the house was so great that not even the most reckless man servant could be persuaded to enter it alone after nightfall.

Next morning at eight o'clock Winther appeared at his

mother-in-law's door, saying that he had forgotten something of importance in the great hall the night before. Madame Wolff had not yet arisen, but the maid who let in the early visitor noticed with surprise that he had a large pistol sticking out of one of his pockets.

Winther had been to his cousin's apartment and found it locked. He now entered the great hall, and at first glance thought it empty. To his alarm and astonishment, however, he saw that the sealed door had been broken open. He approached it with anxiety, and found his wife's cousin, the doughty duelist, lying pale and lifeless on the threshold. Beside him lay a large stone which had struck his head in falling and must have killed him at once. Over the door was a hole in the wall, just the size of the stone. The latter had evidently rested on the upper edge of the door, and must certainly have fallen on its opening. The unfortunate man lay half in the mysterious chamber and half in the hall, just as he must have fallen when the stone struck him.

The formal investigation of the closed room was made in the presence of the police authorities. It contained nothing but a small safe which was built into the wall. When the safe had been opened by force, an inner chamber, which had to be broken open by itself, was found to contain a number of rolls of gold pieces, many jewels and numerous notes and I. O. U.'s. The treasure was covered by an old document. From this latter it was learned that the owner of the house two hundred years ago had been a silk weaver by the name of Flemming Ambrosius Wolff. He was said to have lent money on security for many years, but had died apparently a poor man, because he had so carefully hidden his riches that little of it was found after his death.

With a niggardliness that bordered on madness, he had believed that he could hide his treasure forever by shutting it up in the sealed room. The curse over the door was to frighten away any venturesome mortal, and further security was given by the clause in the title deed.

The universally disliked Lieutenant Flemming Wolff must have had many characteristics in common with this disagreeable old ancestor, to whose treasure he would have fallen heir had he not lost his life in the discovering of it. The old miser had not hidden his wealth for all eternity, as he had hoped, but had only brought about the inheriting of it by Madame Wolff, the owner of the house, and the next of kin. The first use to which this lady put the money was to tear down the uncanny old building and to erect in its stead a beautiful new home for her daughter and son-in-law.

Steen Steensen Blicher

The Rector of Veilbye

THESE extracts from the diary of Erik Sörensen, District Judge, followed by two written statements by the rector of Aalsö, give a complete picture of the terrible events that took place in the parish of Veilbye during Judge Sörensen's first year of office. Should anyone be inclined to doubt the authenticity of these documents let him at least have no doubt about the story, which is, alas! only too sadly true. The memory of these events is still fresh in the district, and the events themselves have been the direct cause of a change in the method of criminal trials. A suspected murderer is now tried through all the courts before his conviction can be determined. Readers versed in the history of law will doubtless know by this during what epoch the story is laid.

I

[*From the Diary of District Judge Erik Sörensen.*]

Now am I, unworthy one, by the grace of God made judge over this district. May the Great Judge above give me wisdom and uprightness that I may fulfill my difficult task in all humility! From the Lord alone cometh judgment.

It is not good that man should live alone. Now that I am able to support a wife I will look about me for a helpmeet. I hear much good said about the daughter of the Rector of Veilbye. Since her mother's death she has been a wise and economical keeper of her father's house. And

as she and her brother the student are the only children, she will inherit a tidy sum when the old man dies.

Morten Bruus of Ingvorstrup was here to-day and wanted to make me a present of a fat calf. But I answered him in the words of Moses, "Cursed be he who taketh gifts." He is of a very quarrelsome nature, a sharp bargainer, and a boastful talker. I do not want to have any dealings with him, except through my office as judge.

I have prayed to God for wisdom and I have consulted with my own heart, and I believe that Mistress Mette Quist is the only woman with whom I could live and die. But I will watch her for a time in secret. Beauty is deceptive and charm is a dangerous thing. But I must say that she is the most beautiful woman I have yet seen.

I think that Morten Bruus a very disagreeable person—I scarcely know why myself. But whenever I see him something comes over me, something that is like the memory of an evil dream. And yet it is so vague and so faint, that I could not say whether I had really ever seen the man in my dreams or not. It may be a sort of presentiment of evil; who knows?

He was here again and offered me a pair of horses—beautiful animals—at a ridiculously low price. It looked queer to me. I know that he paid seventy thalers for them, and he wanted to let me have them for the same price. They are at the least worth one hundred thalers, if not more. Was it intended for a bribe? He may have another lawsuit pending. I do not want his horses.

I paid a visit to the Rector of Veilbye to-day. He is a fine, God-fearing man, but somewhat quick-tempered and dictatorial. And he is close with his money, too, as I could see. Just as I arrived a peasant was with him trying to be let off the payment of part of his tithe. The man is surely a rogue, for the sum is not large. But the rector talked to him as I wouldn't have talked to a dog, and the more, he talked the more violent he became.

Well, we all have our faults. The rector meant well in spite of his violence, for later on he told his daughter to give the man a sandwich and a good glass of beer. She is certainly a charming and sensible girl. She greeted me in a modest and friendly manner, and my heart beat so that I could scarcely say a word in reply. My head farm hand served in the rectory three years. I will question him,—one often hears a straight and true statement from servants.

A surprise! My farm hand Rasmus tells me that Morten Bruus came a-wooing to the rectory at Veilbye some years back, but was sent away with a refusal. The rector seemed to be pleased with him, for the man is rich. But his daughter would not hear to it at all. Pastor Sören may have tried hard to persuade her to consent at first. But when he saw how much she disliked the man he let her do as she would. It was not pride on her part, Rasmus said, for she is as simple and modest as she is good and beautiful. And she knows that her own father is peasant-born as well as Bruus.

Now I know what the Ingvorstrup horses were intended for. They were to blind the judge and to lead him aside from the narrow path of righteousness. The rich Morten Bruus covets poor Ole Anderson's peat moor and pasture land. It would have been a good bargain for Morten even at seventy thalers. But no indeed, my good fellow, you don't know Erik Sörensen!

Rector Sören Quist of Veilbye came to see me this morning. He has a new coachman, Niels Bruus, brother to the owner of Ingvorstrup. Neils is lazy and impertinent. The rector wanted him arrested, but he had no witnesses to back up his complaint. I advised him to get rid of the man somehow, or else to get along with him the best he could until the latter's time was up. The rector was somewhat hasty at first, but later on he listened calmly and thanked me for my good advice. He is inclined to be

violent at times, but can always be brought to listen to reason. We parted good friends.

I spent a charming day in Veilbye yesterday. The rector was not at home, but Mistress Mette received me with great friendliness. She sat by the door spinning when I arrived, and it seemed to me that she blushed. It was hardly polite for me to wait so long before speaking. When I sit in judgment I never lack for words, but in the presence of this innocent maiden I am as stupid as the veriest simpleton of a chicken thief. But I finally found my voice and the time passed quickly until the rector's return. Then Mistress Mette left us and did not return until she brought in our supper.

Just as she stepped through the doorway the rector was saying to me, "Isn't it about time that you should think of entering into the holy estate of matrimony?" (We had just been speaking of a recent very fine wedding in the neighborhood.) Mistress Mette heard the words and flushed a deep red. Her father laughed and said to her, "I can see, my dear daughter, that you have been standing before the fire."

I shall take the good man's advice and will very soon try my fate with her. For I think I may take the rector's words to be a secret hint that he would not object to me as a son-in-law. And the daughter? Was her blush a favorable sign?

Poor Ole Anderson keeps his peat moor and his pasture land, but rich Morten Bruus is angry at me because of it. When he heard the decision he closed his eyes and set his lips tight, and his face was as pale as a whitewashed wall. But he controlled himself and as he went out he called back to his adversary, "Wish you joy of the bargain, Ole Anderson. The peat bog won't beggar me, and the cattle at Ingvorstrup have all the hay they can eat." I could hear his loud laughter outside and the cracking of

his whip. It is not easy to have to sit in judgment. Every decision makes but one enemy the more.

Yesterday was the happiest day of my life. We celebrated our betrothal in the Rectory of Veilbye. My future father-in-law spoke to the text, " I gave my handmaid into thy bosom " (Genesis xvi, 5). His words touched my heart. I had not believed that this serious and sometimes brusque man could talk so sweetly. When the solemnity was over, I received the first kiss from my sweet betrothed, and the assurance of her great love for me.

At supper and later on we were very merry. Many of the dead mother's kin were present. The rector's family were too far away. After supper we danced until daybreak and there was no expense spared in the food and wine. My future father-in-law was the strongest man present, and could easily drink all the others under the table. The wedding is to take place in six weeks. God grant us rich blessings.

It is not good that my future father-in-law should have this Niels Bruus in his service. He is a defiant fellow, a worthy brother of him of Ingvorstrup. If it were I, he should have his wages and be turned off, the sooner the better. But the good rector is stubborn and insists that Niels shall serve out his time. The other day he gave the fellow a box on the ear, at which Niels cried out that he would make him pay for it. The rector told me of this himself, for no one else had been present. I talked to Niels, but he would scarcely answer me. I fear he has a stubborn and evil nature. My sweet betrothed also entreats her father to send the fellow away, but the rector will not listen to reason. I do not know what the old man will do when his daughter leaves his home for mine. She saves him much worry and knows how to make all things smooth and easy. She will be a sweet wife for me.

As I thought, it turned out badly. But there is one good thing about it, Niels has now run off of himself. The rector is greatly angered, but I rejoice in secret that he is rid of that dangerous man. Bruus will probably seek retaliation, but we have law and justice in the land to order such matters.

This was the way of it: The rector had ordered Niels to dig up a bit of soil in the garden. After a time when he went out himself to look at the work, he found Niels leaning on his spade eating nuts. He had not even begun to dig. The rector scolded him, but the fellow answered that he had not taken service as a gardener. He received a good box on the ear for that. At this he threw away his spade and swore valiantly at his master. The old rector lost his temper entirely, seized the spade and struck at the man several times. He should not have done this, for a spade is a dangerous weapon, especially in the hands of a man as strong as is the pastor in spite of his years. Niels fell to the ground as if dead. But when the pastor bent over him in alarm, he sprang up suddenly, jumped the hedge and ran away to the woods.

This is the story of the unfortunate affair as my father-in-law tells it to me. My beloved Mette is much worried about it. She fears the man may do harm to the cattle, or set fire to the house, or in some such way take his revenge. But I tell her there is little fear of that.

Three weeks more and my beloved leaves her father's house for mine. She has been here and has gone over the house and the farm. She is much pleased with everything and praises our orderliness. She is an angel, and all who know her say that I am indeed a fortunate man. To God be the praise!

Strange, where that fellow Niels went to! Could he have left the country altogether? It is an unpleasant affair in any case, and there are murmurings and secret gossip among the peasants. The talk has doubtless started

in Ingvorstrup. It would not be well to have the rector hear it. He had better have taken my advice, but it is not my province to school a servant of God, and a man so much older than I. The idle gossip may blow over ere long. I will go to Veilbye to-morrow and find out if he has heard anything.

The bracelet the goldsmith has made for me is very beautiful. I am sure it will please my sweet Mette.

My honored father-in-law is much distressed and downhearted. Malicious tongues have repeated to him the stupid gossip that is going about in the district. Morten Bruus is reported to have said that "he would force the rector to bring back his brother, if he had to dig him out of the earth." The fellow may be in hiding somewhere, possibly at Ingvorstrup. He has certainly disappeared completely, and no one seems to know where he is. My poor betrothed is much grieved and worried. She is alarmed by bad dreams and by presentiments of evil to come.

God have mercy on us all! I am so overcome by shock and horror that I can scarcely hold the pen. It has all come in one terrible moment, like a clap of thunder. I take no account of time, night and morning are the same to me and the day is but a sudden flash of lightning destroying the proud castle of my hopes and desires. A venerable man of God—the father of my betrothed—is in prison! And as a suspected murderer! There is still hope that he may be innocent. But this hope is but as a straw to a drowning man. A terrible suspicion rests upon him— And I, unhappy man that I am, must be his judge. And his daughter is my betrothed bride! May the Saviour have pity on us!

It was yesterday that this horrible thing came. About half an hour before sunrise Morten Bruus came to my house and had with him the cotter Jens Larsen of Veilbye,

and the widow and daughter of the shepherd of that parish. Morten Bruus said to me that he had the Rector of Veilbye under suspicion of having killed his brother Niels. I answered that I had heard some such talk but had regarded it as idle and malicious gossip, for the rector himself had assured me that the fellow had run away. "If that was so," said Morten, "if Niels had really intended to run away, he would surely at first come to me to tell me of it. But it is not so, as these good people can prove to you, and I demand that you shall hear them as an officer of the law."

"Think well of what you are doing," I said. "Think it over well, Morten Bruus, and you, my good people. You are bringing a terrible accusation against a respected and unspotted priest and man of God. If you can prove nothing, as I strongly suspect, your accusations may cost you dear."

"Priest or no priest," cried Bruus, "it is written, 'thou shalt not kill!' And also is it written, that the authorities bear the sword of justice for all men. We have law and order in the land, and the murderer shall not escape his punishment, even if he have the district judge for a son-in-law."

I pretended not to notice his thrust and began, "It shall be as you say. Kirsten Mads' daughter, what is it that you know of this matter in which Morten Bruus accuses your rector? Tell the truth, and the truth only, as you would tell it before the judgment seat of the Almighty. The law will demand from you that you shall later repeat your testimony under oath."

The woman told the following story: The day on which Niels Bruus was said to have run away from the rectory, she and her daughter were passing along the road near the rectory garden a little after the noon hour. She heard some one calling and saw that it was Niels Bruus looking out through the garden hedge. He asked the daughter if she did not want some nuts and told the women that the rector had ordered him to dig in the garden, but that

he did not take the command very seriously and would much rather eat nuts. At that moment they heard a door open in the house and Niels said, "Now I'm in for a scolding." He dropped back behind the hedge and the women heard a quarrel in the garden. They could hear the words distinctly but they could see nothing, as the hedge was too high. They heard the rector cry, "I'll punish you, you dog. I'll strike you dead at my feet!" Then they heard several sounding slaps, and they heard Niels curse back at the rector and call him evil names. The rector did not answer this, but the women heard two dull blows and saw the head of a spade and part of the handle rise and fall twice over the hedge. Then it was very quiet in the garden, and the widow and her daughter were frightened and hurried on to their cattle in the field. The daughter gave the same testimony, word for word. I asked them if they had not seen Niels Bruus coming out of the garden. But they said they had not, although they had turned back several times to look.

This accorded perfectly with what the rector had told me. It was not strange that the women had not seen the man run out of the garden, for he had gone toward the wood which is on the opposite side of the garden from the highroad. I told Morten Bruus that this testimony was no proof of the supposed murder, especially as the rector himself had narrated the entire occurrence to me exactly as the women had described it. But he smiled bitterly and asked me to examine the third witness, which I proceeded to do.

Jens Larsen testified that he was returning late one evening from Tolstrup (as he remembered, it was not the evening of Niels Bruus's disappearance, but the evening of the following day), and was passing the rectory garden on the easterly side by the usual footpath. From the garden he heard a noise as of some one digging in the earth. He was frightened at first for it was very late, but the moon shone brightly and he thought he would see who it was that was at work in the garden at that hour. He

put off his wooden shoes and pushed aside the twigs of the hedge until he had made a peep hole. In the garden he saw the rector in his usual house coat, a white woolen nightcap on his head. He was busily smoothing down the earth with the flat of his spade. There was nothing else to be seen. Just then the rector had started and partly turned toward the hedge, and the witness, fearing he might be discovered, slipped down and ran home hastily.

Although I was rather surprised that the rector should be working in his garden at so late an hour, I still saw nothing in this statement that could arouse suspicion of murder. I gave the complainant a solemn warning and advised him not only to let fall his accusation, but to put an end to the talk in the parish. He replied, "Not until I see what it is that the rector buried in his garden."

"That will be too late," I said. "You are playing a dangerous game. Dangerous to your own honor and welfare.

"I owe it to my brother," he replied, "and I demand that the authorities shall not refuse me assistance."

My office compelled me to accede to his demands. Accompanied by the accuser and his witnesses I took my way to Veilbye. My heart was very heavy, not so much because of any fear that we might find the missing man buried in the garden, but because of the surprise and distress I must cause the rector and my beloved. As we went on our way I thought over how severely the law would allow me to punish the calumniators. But alas, Merciful Heavens! What a terrible discovery was in store for me!

I had wished to have a moment alone with the rector to prepare him for what was coming. But as I drove through the gate Morten Bruus spurred his horse past me and galloped up to the very door of the house just as the rector opened it. Bruus cried out in his very face, "People say that you have killed my brother and buried him in your garden. I am come with the district judge to seek for him."

The poor rector was so shocked and astounded that he could not find a word to answer. I sprang from my wagon and addressed him: "You have now heard the accusation. I am forced by my office to fulfill this man's demands. But your own honor demands that the truth shall be known and the mouth of slander silenced."

"It is hard enough," began the rector finally, "for a man in my position to have to clear himself from such a suspicion. But come with me. My garden and my entire house are open to you."

We went through the house to the garden. On the way we met my betrothed, who was startled at seeing Bruus. I managed to whisper hastily to her, "Do not be alarmed, dear heart. Your enemies are going to their own destruction." Morten Bruus led the way to the eastern side of the garden near the hedge. We others followed with the rector's farm hands, whom he himself had ordered to join us with spades.

The accuser stood and looked about him until we approached. Then he pointed to one spot. "This looks as if the earth had been disturbed lately. Let us begin here."

"Go to work at once," commanded the rector angrily.

The men set to work, but they were not eager enough to suit Bruus, who seized a spade himself to fire them on. A few strokes only sufficed to show that the firm earth of this particular spot had not been touched for many years. We all rejoiced—except Bruus—and the rector was very happy. He triumphed openly over his accuser, and laughed at him, "Can't you find anything, you libeler?"

Bruus did not answer. He pondered for a few moments, then called out, "Jens Larsen, where was it you saw the rector digging?"

Jens Larsen had been standing to one side with his hands folded, watching the work. At Bruus's words he aroused himself as if from a dream, looked about him and pointed to a corner of the garden several yards from where we stood. "I think it was over there."

"What's that, Jens!" cried the rector angrily. "When did I dig here?"

Paying no heed to this, Morten Bruus called the men to the corner in question. The earth here was covered by some withered cabbage stalks, broken twigs, and other brush which he pushed aside hurriedly. The work began anew.

I stood by the rector talking calmly with him about the punishment we could mete out to the dastardly accuser, when one of the men suddenly cried out with an oath. We looked toward them; there lay a hat half buried in the loose earth. "We have found him," cried Bruus. "That is Niels's hat; I would know it anywhere."

My blood seemed turned to ice. All my hopes dashed to the ground. "Dig! Dig!" cried the bloodthirsty accaccuser, working himself with all his might. I looked at the rector. He was ghastly pale, staring with wide-open eyes at the horrible spot.

Another shout! A hand was stretched up through the earth as if to greet the workers. "See there!" screamed Bruus. "He is holding out his hand to me. Wait a little, Brother Niels! You will soon be avenged!"

The entire corpse was soon uncovered. It was the missing man. His face was not recognizable, as decomposition had begun, and the nose was broken and laid flat by a blow. But all the garments, even to the shirt with his name woven into it, were known to those who stood there. In one ear was a leaden ring, which, as we all knew, Niels Bruus had worn for many years.

"Now, priest," cried Morten Bruus, "come and lay your hand on this dead man if you dare to!"

"Almighty God!" sighed the rector, looking up to heaven, "Thou art my witness that I am innocent. I struck him, that I confess, and I am bitterly sorry for it. But he ran away. God Almighty alone knows who buried him here."

"Jens Larsen knows also," cried Bruus, "and I may find more witnesses. Judge! You will come with me to ex-

amine his servants. But first of all I demand that you shall arrest this wolf in sheep's clothing."

Merciful God, how could I doubt any longer? The truth was clear to all of us. But I was ready to sink into the earth in my shock and horror. I was about to say to the rector that he must prepare to follow me, when he himself spoke to me, pale and trembling like an aspen leaf. "Appearances are against me," he said, "but this is the work of the devil and his angels. There is One above who will bring my innocence to light. Come, judge, I will await my fate in fetters. Comfort my daughter. Remember that she is your betrothed bride."

He had scarcely uttered the words when I heard a scream and a fall behind us. It was my beloved who lay unconscious on the ground. I thought at first that she was dead, and God knows I wished that I could lie there dead beside her. I raised her in my arms, but her father took her from me and carried her into the house. I was called to examine the wound on the dead man's head. The cut was not deep, but it had evidently fractured the skull, and had plainly been made by a blow from a spade or some similar blunt instrument.

Then we all entered the house. My beloved had revived again. She fell on my neck and implored me, in the name of God, to help her father in his terrible need. She begged me by the memory of our mutual love to let her follow him to prison, to which I consented. I myself accompanied him to Grenaa, but with a mournful heart. None of us spoke a word on the sad journey. I parted from them in deep distress. The corpse was laid in a coffin and will be buried decently to-morrow in Veilbye churchyard.

To-morrow I must give a formal hearing to the witnesses. God be merciful to me, unfortunate man!

Would that I had never obtained this position for which I—fool that I am—strove so hard.

As the venerable man of God was brought before me, fettered hand and foot, I felt as Pilate must have felt as they brought Christ before him. It was to me as if my beloved—God grant her comfort, she lies ill in Grenaa—had whispered to me, "Do nothing against that good man!"

Oh, if he only were innocent, but I see no hope!

The three first witnesses repeated their testimony under oath, word for word. Then came statements by the rector's two farm hands and the dairy maid. The men had been in the kitchen on the fatal day, and as the windows were open they had heard the quarrel between the rector and Niels. As the widow had stated, these men had also heard the rector say, "I will strike you dead at my feet!" They further testified that the rector was very quick-tempered, and that when angered he did not hesitate to strike out with whatever came into his hand. He had struck a former hand once with a heavy maul.

The girl testified that on the night Jens Larsen claimed to have seen the rector in the garden, she had lain awake and heard the creaking of the garden door. When she looked out of the window she had seen the rector in his dressing gown and nightcap go into the garden. She could not see what he was doing there. But she heard the door creak again about an hour later.

When the witnesses had been heard, I asked the unfortunate man whether he would make a confession, or else, if he had anything to say in his own defense. He crossed his hands over his breast and said, "So help me God, I will tell the truth. I have nothing more to say than what I have said already. I struck the dead man with my spade. He fell down, but jumped up in a moment and ran away from the garden out into the woods. What may have happened to him there, or how he came to be buried in my garden, this I do not know. When Jens Larsen and my servant testify that they saw me at night in the garden, either they are lying, or Satan has blinded them. I

can see this—unhappy man that I am—that I have no one to turn to for help here on earth. Will He who is in heaven he silent also, then must I bow to His inscrutable will." He bowed his head with a deep sigh.

Some of those present began to weep, and a murmur arose that he might possibly be innocent. But this was only the effect of the momentary sympathy called out by his attitude. My own heart indeed spoke for him. But the judge's heart may not dare to dictate to his brain or to his conscience. My conviction forced me to declare that the rector had killed Niels Bruus, but certainly without any premeditation or intention to do so. It is true that Niels Bruus had often been heard to declare that he would "get even with the rector when the latter least expected it." But it is not known that he had fulfilled his threat in any way. Every man clings to life and honor as long as he can. Therefore the rector persists in his denial. My poor, dear Mette! She is lost to me for this life at least, just as I had learned to love her so dearly.

I have had a hard fight to fight to-day. As I sat alone, pondering over this terrible affair in which it is my sad lot to have to give judgment, the door opened and the rector's daughter—I may no longer call her my betrothed—rushed in and threw herself at my feet. I raised her up, clasped her in my arms and we wept together in silence. I was first to control myself. "I know what you would say, dear heart. You want me to save your father. Alas, God help us poor mortals, I cannot do it! Tell me, dearest one, tell me truly, do you yourself believe your father to be innocent?"

She crossed her hands on her heart and sobbed, "I do not know!" Then she burst into tears again. "But he did not bury him in the garden," she continued after a few moments. "The man may have died in the woods from the blow. That may have happened——"

"But, dearest heart," I said, "Jens Larsen and the girl saw your father in the garden that night."

She shook her head slowly and answered, "The evil one blinded their eyes." She wept bitterly again.

"Tell me, beloved," she began again, after a while, "tell me frankly this much. If God sends us no further enlightenment in this unfortunate affair, what sentence must you give?"

She gazed anxiously at me, her lips trembling.

"If I did not believe," I began slowly, "that anyone else in my place would be more severe than I, then I would gladly give up my position at once and refuse to speak the verdict. But I dare not conceal from you that the mildest sentence that God, our king, and our laws demand is, a life for a life."

She sank to her knees, then sprang up again, fell back several steps as if afraid of me, and cried out: "Would you murder my father? Would you murder your betrothed bride? See here! See this!" She came nearer and held up her hand with my ring on it before my eyes. "Do you see this betrothal ring? What was it my father said when you put this ring upon my finger? 'I have given my maid unto thy bosom!' But you, you thrust the steel deep into my bosom!"

Alas, every one of her words cut deep into my own heart. "Dearest love," I cried, "do not speak so. You thrust burning irons into my heart. What would you have me do? Acquit him, when the laws of God and man condemn?"

She was silent, sobbing desperately.

"One thing I can do," I continued. "If it be wrong may God forgive me. If the trial goes on to an end his life is forfeited, there is no hope except in flight. If you can arrange an escape I will close my eyes. I will not see or hear anything. As soon as your father was imprisoned, I wrote to your brother in Copenhagen. He can arrive any moment now. Talk to him, make friends with the jailer. If you lack money, all I have is yours."

When I had finished her face flushed with joy, and she threw her arms about my neck. "God bless you for these

words. Were my brother but here, he will know what to do. But where shall we go?" her tone changed suddenly and her arms dropped. "Even should we find a refuge in a foreign country I could never see you again!" Her tone was so sad that my heart was near to breaking.

"Beloved," I exclaimed, "I will find you wherever you may hide yourself! Should our money not be sufficient to support us I can work for us all. I have learned to use the ax and the hoe."

She rejoiced again and kissed me many times. We prayed to God to bless our undertaking and parted with glad hearts. I also hoped for the best. Doubts assail me, but God will find for us some light in this darkness.

Two more new witnesses. They bring nothing good, I fear, for Bruus announced them with an expression I did not like. He has a heart of stone, which can feel nothing but malice and bitterness. I give them a hearing to-morrow. I feel as if they had come to bear witness against me myself. May God strengthen my heart.

All is over. He has confessed.

The court was in session and the prisoner had been brought in to hear the testimony of the new witnesses. These men stated as follows: On the night in question they were walking along the path that led between the woods and the rectory garden. A man with a large sack on his back came out of the woods and walked ahead of them toward the garden. They could not see his face, but in the bright moonlight his figure was clearly visible, and they could see that he wore a loose green garment, like a dressing gown, and a white nightcap. The man disappeared through an opening in the rectory garden fence.

Scarcely had the first witness ended his statement when the rector turned ghastly pale, and gasped, in a voice that could scarcely be heard, "I am ill." They gave him a chair.

Bruus turned to his neighbor and exclaimed audibly, "That helped the rector's memory."

The prisoner did not hear the words, but motioned to me and said, "Lead me back to my prison. I will talk to you there." They did as he demanded.

We set out at once for Grenaa. The rector was in the wagon with the jailer and the gendarme, and I rode beside them.

When the door of the cell was opened my beloved was making up her father's bed, and over a chair by the bedside hung the fatal green dressing gown. My dear betrothed greeted me with a cry of joy, as she believed that I was come to set her father free. She hung about the old man's neck, kissing away the tears that rolled unhindered down his cheeks. I had not the heart to undeceive her, and I sent her out into the town to buy some things for us.

"Sit down, dear friend," said the rector, when we were alone. He seated himself on the bed, staring at the ground with eyes that did not see. Finally he turned toward me where I sat trembling, as if it were my own sentence I was to hear, as in a manner it was. "I am a great sinner," he sighed, "God only knows how great. His punishment crushes me here that I may enter into His mercy hereafter."

He grew gradually calmer and began:

"Since my childhood I have been hot-tempered and violent. I could never endure contradiction, and was always ready to give a blow. But I have seldom let the sun go down upon my wrath, and I have never borne hatred toward any man. As a half-grown boy I killed our good, kind watchdog in one of my fits of rage for some trifling offense, and I have never ceased to regret it. Later, as a student in Leipzig, I let myself be carried away sufficiently to wound seriously my adversary in one of our fencing bouts. A merciful fate alone saved me from becoming a murderer then. It is for these earlier sins that I am now being punished, but the punishment falls doubly hard, now that I am an old man, a priest, a servant of the Lord of

Peace, and a father! Ah, that is the deepest wound!" He sprang up and wrung his hands in deep despair. I would have said something to comfort him, but I could find no words for such sorrow.

When he had controlled himself somewhat he sat down again and continued: "To you, once my friend and now my judge, I will confess this crime, which it seems beyond a doubt that I have committed, although I am not conscious of having done so." (I was startled at this, as I had expected a remorseful confession.) "Listen well to what I shall now tell you. That I struck the unfortunate man with the spade, that he fell down and then ran away, this is all that I know with full consciousness. . . . What followed then? Four witnesses have seen that I fetched the body and buried it in my garden—and now at last I am forced to believe that it must be true. These are my reasons for the belief. "Three or four times in my life I have walked in my sleep. The last time—it may have been nine or ten years ago—I was to have held a funeral service on the following day, over the body of a man who had died a sudden and terrible death. I could not find a suitable text, until suddenly there came to me the words of an old Greek philosopher, 'Call no man fortunate until his death.' It was in my mind that the same idea was expressed in different words in the Holy Scriptures. I sought and sought, but could not find it. At last I went to bed much fatigued, and slept soundly. Next morning, when I sat down at my desk, to my great astonishment I saw there a piece of paper, on which was written, 'Call no man happy until his end hath come' (Sirach xi. 34), and following it was a funeral sermon, short, but as good in construction as any I have ever written. And all this was in my own handwriting. It was quite out of the question that anyone could have entered the room during the night, as I had locked it myself, and it had not been opened until I entered next day. I knew what had happened, as I could remember one or two such occurrences in my life before.

"Therefore, dear friend, when the last witnesses gave

their testimony to-day, I suddenly remembered my sleep-walking exploits, and I also remembered, what had slipped my mind before, that on the morning after the night the body was buried I had found my dressing gown in the hall outside of my bedroom. This had surprised me, as I always hung it over a chair near my bed. The unfortunate victim of my violence must have died in the woods from his wound, and in my dream consciousness I must have seen this and gone to fetch the body. It must be so. I know no other explanation. God have mercy on my sinful soul." He was silent again, covering his face with his hands and weeping bitterly.

I was struck dumb with astonishment and uncertainty. I had always suspected that the victim had died on the spot where he was buried, although I could not quite understand how the rector had managed to bury the body by day without being seen. But I thought that he might have covered it lightly with earth and twigs and finished his work at night. He was a man of sufficient strength of mind to have done this. When the latest witnesses were telling their story, I noted the possible contradiction, and hoped it might prove a loophole of escape. But, alas, it was all only too true, and the guilt of the rector proven beyond a doubt. It was not at all impossible for a man to do such things in his sleep. Just as it was quite possible that a man with a fractured skull could run some distance before he fell to die. The rector's story bore the stamp of truth, although the doubt *will* come that he desired thus to save a shred of honor for his name.

The prisoner walked up and down the room several times, then stopping before me he said gravely: "You have now heard my confession, here in my prison walls. It is your mouth that must speak my sentence. But what says your heart?"

I could scarcely utter the words, "My heart suffers beyond expression. I would willingly see it break if I could but save you from a shameful death." (I dared not mention to him my last hope of escape in flight.)

"That is impossible," he answered. "My life is forfeited. My death is just, and shall serve as a warning to others. But promise me that you will not desert my poor daughter. I had thought to lay her in your arms"—tears choked his voice—"but, alas, that fond hope is vanished. You cannot marry the daughter of a sentenced murderer. But promise me that you will watch over her as her second father." In deep sorrow and in tears I held his hand in mine. "Have you any news from my son?" he began again. "I hope it will be possible to keep him in ignorance of this terrible affair until—until it is all over. I could not bear to see him now. And now, dear friend, let us part, not to meet again except in the hall of justice. Grant me of your friendship one last service, let it end soon. I long for death. Go now, my kind, sympathetic judge. Send for me to-morrow to speak my sentence, and send to-day for my brother in God, the pastor in Aalsö. He shall prepare me for death. God be with you."

He gave me his hand with his eyes averted. I staggered from the prison, hardly conscious of what I was doing. I would have ridden home without seeing his daughter had she not met me by the prison door. She must have seen the truth in my face, for she paled and caught at my arm. She gazed at me with her soul in her eyes, but could not speak. "Flee! Save your father in flight!" was all I could say.

I set spurs to my horse and rode home somehow.

To-morrow, then!

The sentence is spoken.

The accused was calmer than the judge. All those present, except his bitter enemy, were affected almost to tears. Some whispered that the punishment was too severe.

May God be a milder judge to me than I, poor sinner, am forced to be to my fellow men.

She has been here. She found me ill in bed. There is no escape possible. He will not flee. Everything was arranged and the jailer was ready to help. But he re-

fuses, he longs for death. God be merciful to the poor girl. How will she survive the terrible day? I am ill in body and soul, I can neither aid nor comfort her. There is no word from the brother.

I feel that I am near death myself, as near perhaps as he is, whom I sent to his doom. Farewell, my own beloved bride. . . . What will she do? she is so strangely calm—the calm of wordless despair. Her brother has not yet come, and to-morrow—on the Ravenshill——!

Here the diary of Erik Sörensen stopped suddenly. What followed can be learned from the written and witnessed statements of the pastor of Aalsö, the neighboring parish to Veilbye.

II

It was during the seventeenth year of my term of office that the terrible event happened in the neighborhood which filled all who heard of it with shock and horror, and brought shame and disgrace upon our holy calling. The venerable Sören Quist, Rector of Veilbye, killed his servant in a fit of rage and buried the body in his garden.

He was found guilty at the official trial, through the testimony of many witnesses, as well as through his own confession. He was condemned to death, and the sentence was carried out in the presence of several thousand people on the little hill known as Ravenshill, here in the field of Aalsö.

The condemned man had asked that I might visit him in his prison. I must state that I have never given the holy sacrament to a better prepared or more truly repentant Christian. He was calm to the last, full of remorse for his great sin. On the field of death he spoke to the people in words of great wisdom and power, preaching to the text from the Lamentations of Jeremiah, chap. ii., verse 6: "He hath despised the priest in the indignation of his anger." He spoke of his violence and of its terrible results, and of

his deep remorse. He exhorted his hearers to let his sin and his fate be an example to them, and a warning not to give way to anger. Then he commended his soul to the Lord, removed his upper garments, bound up his eyes with his own hand, then folded his hands in prayer. When I had spoken the words, " Brother, be of good cheer. This day shalt thou be with thy Saviour in Paradise," his head fell by the ax.

The one thing that made death bitter for him was the thought of his children. The son had been sent for from Copenhagen, but as we afterwards learned, he had been absent from the city, and therefore did not arrive until shortly after his father had paid the penalty for his crime.

I took the daughter into my home, where she was brought, half fainting, after they had led her father from the prison. She had been tending him lovingly all the days of his trial. What made even greater sorrow for the poor girl, and for the district judge who spoke the sentence, was that these two young people had solemnly plighted their troth but a few short weeks before, in the rectory of Veilbye. The son arrived just as the body of the executed criminal was brought into my house. It had been permitted to us to bury the body with Christian rites, if we could do it in secret. The young man threw himself over the lifeless body. Then, clasping his sister in his arms, the two wept together in silence for some while. At midnight we held a quiet service over the remains of the Rector of Veilbye, and the body was buried near the door of Aalsö church. A simple stone, upon which I have carved a cross, still stands to remind the passer-by of the sin of a most unfortunate man.

The next morning his two children had disappeared. They have never been heard of since. God knows to what far-away corner of the world they have fled, to hide their shame and their sorrow. The district judge is very ill, and it is not believed that he will recover.

May God deal with us all after His wisdom and His mercy!

O Lord, inscrutable are thy ways!

In the thirty-eighth year of my service, and twenty-one years after my unfortunate brother in office, the Rector of Veilbye had been beheaded for the murder of his servant, it happened one day that a beggar came to my door. He was an elderly man, with gray hair, and walked with a crutch. He looked sad and needy. None of the servants were about, so I myself went into the kitchen and gave him a piece of bread. I asked him where he came from. He sighed and answered:

"From nowhere in particular."

Then I asked him his name. He sighed still deeper, looked about him as if in fear, and said, "They once called me Niels Bruus."

I was startled, and said, "God have mercy on us! That is a bad name. That is the name of a man who was killed many years back."

Whereat the man sighed still deeper and replied: "It would have been better for me had I died then. It has gone ill with me since I left the country."

At this the hair rose on my head, and I trembled in every limb. For it seemed to me that I could recognize him, and also it seemed to me that I saw Morten Bruus before me in the flesh, and yet I had laid the earth over him three years before. I stepped back and made the sign of the cross, for verily I thought it was a ghost I saw before me.

But the man sat down in the chimney corner and continued to speak. "Reverend father, they tell me my brother Morten is dead. I have been to Ingvorstrup, but the new owner chased me away. Is my old master, the Rector of Veilbye, still alive?" Then it was that the scales fell from my eyes and I saw into the very truth of this whole terrible affair. But the shock stunned me so that I could not speak. The man bit into his bread greedily and went on. "Yes, that was all Brother Morten's fault. Did the old rector have much trouble about it?"

"Niels! Niels!" I cried from out the horror of my soul, "you have a monstrous black sin upon your conscience!

For your sake that unfortunate man fell by the ax of the executioner!"

The bread and the crutch fell from his hand, and he himself was near to falling into the fire. "May God forgive you, Morten!" he groaned. "God knows I didn't mean anything like that. May my sin be forgiven me! But surely you only mean to frighten me! I come from far away, and have heard nothing. No one but you, reverend father, has recognized me. I have told my name to no one. When I asked them in Veilbye if the rector was still there, they said that he was."

"That is the new rector," I replied. "Not he whom you and your sinful brother have slain."

He wrung his hands and cried aloud, and then I knew that he had been but a tool in the hands of that devil, Morten. Therefore I set to work to comfort him, and took him into my study that he might calm himself sufficiently to tell me the detail of this Satan's work.

This was the story as he tells it: His brother Morten —truly a son of Belial—cherished a deadly hatred toward pastor Sören Quist since the day the latter had refused him the hand of his daughter. As soon as he heard that the pastor's coachman had left him, he persuaded Niels to take the place.

"Watch your chance well," he had said, "we'll play the black coat a trick some day, and you will be no loser by it."

Niels, who was rough and defiant by nature, soon came to a quarrel with his master, and when he had received his first chastisement, he ran at once to Ingvorstrup to report it. "Let him strike you just once again," said Morten. "Then come to me, and we will pay him for it."

Then came the quarrel in the garden, and Niels ran off to Ingvorstrup. He met his brother in the woods and told him what had occurred.

"Did anyone see you on the way here?" asked Morten.

Niels thought not. "Good," said Morten; "now we'll give him a fright that he will not forget for a week or so."

He led Niels carefully to the house, and kept him hidden there the rest of the day. When all the household else had gone to sleep the two brothers crept out, and went to a field where several days before they had buried the body of a man of about Niel's age, size, and general appearance. (He had hanged himself, some said because of ill-treatment from Morten, in whose service he was. Others said it was because of unhappy love.) They dug up the corpse, although Niels did not like the work, and protested. But Morten was the stronger, and Niels had to do as he was ordered. They carried the body back with them into the house.

Then Niels was ordered to take off all his clothes, piece by piece, even to his shirt, and dress the dead man in them. Even his leaden earring, which he had worn for many years, was put in the ear of the corpse. After this was done, Morten took a spade and gave the head of the corpse two crashing blows, one over the nose, the other on the temple. The body was hidden in a sack and kept in the house during the next day. At night the day following, they carried it out to the wood near Veilbye.

Several times Niels had asked of his brother what all this preparation boded. But Morten answered only, "That is my affair. Do as I tell you, and don't ask questions."

When they neared the edge of the wood by Veilbye, Morten said, "Now fetch me one of the coats the pastor wears most. If you can, get the green dressing gown I have often seen him wear mornings."

"I don't dare," said Niels, "he keeps it in his bed chamber."

"Well, then, I'll dare it myself," said Morten. "And now, go your way, and never show yourself here again. Here is a bag with one hundred thalers. They will last you until you can take service somewhere in another country. Go where no one has ever seen you, and take another name. Never come back to Denmark again. Travel by night, and hide in the woods by day until you are well away from here. Here are provisions enough to last you for

several days. And remember, never show yourself here again, as you value your life."

Niels obeyed, and has never seen his brother since that day. He had had much trouble, had been a soldier and lost his health in the war, and finally, after great trials and sufferings, had managed to get back to the land of his birth. This was the story as told me by the miserable man, and I could not doubt its truth.

It was now only too clear to me that my unfortunate brother in the Lord had fallen a victim to the hatred of his fiendish enemy, to the delusion of his judge and the witnesses, and to his own credulous imagination.

Oh, what is man that he shall dare to sit in judgment over his fellows! God alone is the Judge. He who gives life may alone give death!

I did not feel it my duty to give official information against this crushed and broken sinner, particularly as the district judge is still alive, and it would have been cruelty to let him know of his terrible error.

Instead, I gave what comfort my office permitted to the poor man, and recommended him not to reveal his name or tell his story to anyone in the district. On these conditions I would give him a home until I could arrange for a permanent refuge for him in my brother's house, a good distance from these parts.

The day following was a Sunday. When I returned from evening service at my branch parish, the beggar had disappeared. But by the evening of the next day the story was known throughout the neighborhood.

Goaded by the pangs of conscience, Niels had gone to Rosmer and made himself known to the judge as the true Niels Bruus. Upon the hearing of the terrible truth, the judge was taken with a stroke and died before the week was out. But on Tuesday morning they found Niels Bruus dead on the grave of the late rector Sören Quist of Veilbye, by the door of Aalsö church.